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THE
MISSIONARY:

AN
Indian Tale.

BY
MISS OWENSON.

WITH A PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

FOURTH EDITION.

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TO THE MOST NOBLE

ANN JANE,

MARCHIONESS OF ABERCORN,

THE FOLLOWING

TALE

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

THE
MISSIONARY,
&c.

CHAPTER I.

IN the beginning of the seventeenth century, Portugal, bereft of her natural sovereigns, had become an object of contention, to various powers in Europe. The houses of Braganza and of Parma, of Savoy and Medici, alike published their pretensions, and alike submitted to that decision, which the arms of Spain finally made in its own favour. Under the goading oppression of Philip the Second, and of his two

immediate successors, the national independence of a brave people faded gradually away, and Portugal, wholly losing its rank in the scale of nations, sunk into a Spanish province. From the torpid dream of slavish dependence, the victims of a mild oppression were suddenly awakened, by the rapacious cruelties of Olivarez, the gloomy minister of Philip the Fourth; and the spring of national liberty, receiving its impulse from the very pressure of the tyranny which crushed it, already recovered something of that tone of force and elasticity which finally produced one of the most singular and perfect revolutions, which the history of nations has recorded. It was at this period, that Portugal became divided into two powerful factions,

and the Spanish partizans, and Portuguese patriots, openly expressed their mutual abhorrence, and secretly planned their respective destruction. Even Religion forfeited her dove-like character of peace, and enrolled herself beneath the banners of civil discord and factious commotion. The Jesuits governed with the Spaniards; the Franciscans resisted with the Portuguese; and each accused the other of promulgating heretical tenets, in support of that cause, to which each was respectively attached *.

* The Jesuits, being charged with fraudulent practices, in endeavouring to persuade the Indians that the Brahminical and Christian doctrines differed not essentially, were openly condemned by the Franciscans; which

It was in the midst of these religious and political feuds, that the Order of St. Francis became distinguished in Portugal, by the sanctity and genius of one of its members ; and the monastery, into which the holy enthusiast had retired from the splendour of opulence and rank, from the pleasures of youth and the pursuits of life, became the shrine of pilgrimage, to many pious votarists, who sought Heaven through the mediation of him, who, on earth, had already obtained the title of “ the man without a fault.”

laid the foundation of those long and violent contests, decided by Innocent the Tenth, in favour of the Franciscans.

The monastery of St. Francis stands at the foot of that mighty chain of mountains, which partially divides the province of Alentejo from the sea-beat shores of Algarva. Excavated from a pile of rocks, its cells are little better than rude caverns; and its heavy portico, and gloomy chapel, are composed of the fragments of a Moorish castle, whose mouldering turrets mingle, in the haze of distance, with the lofty spires of the Christian sanctuary, while both are reflected, by the bosom of one of those lakes so peculiar to Portugal, whose subterraneous thunder rolls with an incessant uproar, even when the waves of the ocean are still, and the air breathes of peace. Celebrated, in the natural history of the country,

for its absorbent and sanative qualities, Superstition had wrested the phænomenon to her own mystic purposes; and the roaring lake, which added so fine and awful a feature to the gloomy scenery of the convent, brought to its altars the grateful tributes of those, who piously believed that they obtained, from the consecrated waters, health in this world, and salvation in the world to come.

To the left of the monastery, some traces of a Roman fortress, similar to that of Coimbra, were still visible: to the north, the mighty hills of Alentejo terminated the prospect: while to the south, the view seemed extended to infinitude by the mightier ocean, beyond whose hori-

zon fancy sought the coast of Carthage; and memory, awakening to her magic, dwelt on the altar of Hannibal, or hovered round the victor standard of Scipio Africanus. The mountains; the ocean; the lake of subterraneous thunder; the ruins of Moorish splendour; the vestiges of Roman prowess; the pile of monastic gloom:—magnificent assemblage of great and discordant images! What various epochas in time; what various states of human power and human intellect, did not ye blend and harmonize, in one great picture! What a powerful influence were not your wildness and your solemnity, your grandeur and your gloom, calculated to produce upon the mind of religious enthusiasm, upon the spirit of genius and melancholy;

upon a character, formed of all the higher elements of human nature, upon such a mind, upon such a genius, upon such a character as thine, Hilarion !

Amidst the hanging woods which shaded the southern side of the mountains of Algarva, rose the turrets of the castle of Acugna ; and the moon-beams which fell upon its ramparts, were reflected back by the glittering spires of St. Francis.

To this solitary and deserted castle, Hilarion, Count d'Acugna, had been sent, by his uncle and guardian, the Archbishop of Lisbon, in 1620. The young Hilarion had scarcely attained his tenth year. His sole companion was his pre-

ceptor, an old brother of the order of St. Francis. History attests the antiquity and splendour of the House d'Acugna. The royal blood of Portugal flowed in the veins of Hilarion, for his mother was a daughter of the House of Braganza. His elder, and only brother, Don Lewis, Duke d'Acugna, was one of the most powerful grandees in the state; his uncle, the Archbishop of Lisbon, was considered as the leader of the disaffected nobles, whom the Spanish tyranny had almost driven to desperation; and, while the Duke and the Prelate were involved in all the political commotions of the day, the young Hilarion, impressed by the grand solemnity of the images by which he was surrounded; inflamed by the visionary nature of

his religious studies ; borne away by the complexional enthusiasm of his character, and influenced by the eloquence and example of his preceptor, emulated the ascetic life of his patron saint, sighed to retire to some boundless desert, to live superior to nature, and to nature's laws, beyond the power of temptation, and the possibility of error ; to subdue, alike, the human weakness and the human passion, and, wholly devoted to Heaven, to give himself up to such spiritual communions and celestial visions, as visit the souls of the pure in spirit, even during their probation on earth, until, his unregulated mind becoming the victim of his ardent imagination, he lost sight of the true object of human existence, a life acceptable to the Creator by

being serviceable to his creatures. Endowed with that complexional enthusiasm, which disdains the ordinary business of life, with that profound sensibility which unfits for its pursuits, wrapt in holy dreams and pious ecstasies, all external circumstances gradually faded from his view, and, in his eighteenth year, believing himself, by the sudden death of his preceptor, to be the "inheritor of his sacred mantle," he offered up the sacrifice of his worldly honours, of his human possessions, to Heaven, and became a monk of the order of St. Francis.

The Archbishop, and the Duke d'Acugna, received the intelligence of his profession with less emotion than surprise. Absence had loosen-

ed the tie of natural affection. The political state of Portugal rendered an adequate provision for the younger brother of so illustrious an house, difficult and precarious; and the Patriarch of Lisbon well knew that, to enter the portals of the church was not to close, for ever, the gate of temporal preferment. The uncle and the brother wrote to felicitate the young monk on his heavenly vocation, presented a considerable donation to the monastery of St. Francis, and soon lost sight of their enthusiast-relative in the public commotions and private factions of the day.

CHAPTER II.

THERE is a dear and precious period in the life of man, which, brief as sweet, is best appreciated in recollection; when but to exist is to enjoy; when the rapid pulse throbs, wildly, with the vague delight which fills the careless heart, and when it may be truly said, "that nothing is, but what is not."

While this rainbow hour lasted, the thorny wreath, which faith had plaited round Hilarion's brow, was worn as cheerily, as if the rose of pleasure had glowed upon his temple. The vows he had made were ever

present to his mind. The ceremonies of his religion occupied his imagination ; and its forms, no less than its spirit, engaged his whole existence. He had taken holy orders, and was frequently engaged in the interesting offices of the priesthood. He studied, with unwearied ardour, the sacred legends and records of the convent library, and, during six years of monastic seclusion, his pure and sinless life had been so distinguished by religious discipline and pious austerity ; by devotional zeal and fervid enthusiasm ; by charitable exertion and rigid self-denial ; and by an eloquence in the cause of religion, so profound, so brilliant, and so touching, that, even envy, which, in a cloister's gloom, survives the death of better passions, flung

not its venom on his sacred character; and the celebrity of the *man without a fault* had extended far beyond the confines of his own secluded monastery.

The monks conceived, that his illustrious birth, not less than his eminent genius and unrivalled piety, threw a splendour on their order, and they daily looked forward to the hour when the Father Hilarion should wave the banner of successful controversy over the prostrate necks of the fallen Jesuits. Yet the brotherhood had hitherto but remotely hinted their wishes, or suggested their expectations. The familiar ease of the novice had faded away with the purple bloom of the youth; and the reserved dignity of the man

threw, at an hopeless distance, those whom the monk, indeed, in the meekness of religious phraseology, called his superiors ; but whom the saint and the nobleman equally felt unworthy to be classed with him, as beings of the same species ; he stood alone, lofty and aspiring, self-wrapt and dignified ; and no external discipline, no internal humiliation, had so crucified the human weakness in his bosom, as wholly to exclude the leaven of mortality from the perfection of religious excellence.

Hitherto the life of the young monk resembled the pure and holy dream of saintly slumbers, for it was still a dream ; splendid indeed, but visionary ; pure, but useless ;

bright, but unsubstantial. Dead to all those ties, which, at once, constitute the charm and the anxiety of existence, which agitate while they bless the life of man, the spring of human affection lay untouched within his bosom, and the faculty of human reason unused within his mind. Hitherto, his genius had alone betrayed its powers, in deceiving others, or himself, by those imposing creations, by which faith was secured through the medium of imagination; and the ardour of his tender feelings wasted, in visions of holy illusion, or dreams of pious fraud. Yet these feelings, though unexercised, were not extinct; they betrayed their existence even in the torpid life he had chosen; for the true source of his religion, enveloped

as it was in mysteries and dogmas, was but a divine and tender impulse of gratitude towards the First Cause; and his benevolent charity, which he coldly called his duty, but the extension of that impulse towards his fellow-creature! His habits, though they had tended to calm the impetuosity of his complexional character, and to purify and strengthen his moral principles, had added to his enthusiasm, what they had subtracted from his passions, and had given to his zeal, all that they had taken from his heart: but when the animated fervour of adolescence subsided in the dignified tranquillity of manhood, when the reiteration of the same images denied the same vivacity of sensation as had distinguished their original

impression, then the visions, which had entranced his dreaming youth, ceased to people and to cheer his unbroken solitude; then, even Religion, though she lost nothing of her influence, lost much of her charm. While the faith which occupied his soul was not sufficient, in its pure but passive effects, to engage his life; the active vital principle, which dictates to man, the sphere for which he was created, preyed on its own existence, and he turned upon himself those exertions, which were intended to benefit the species to which he belonged; his religious discipline became more severe; his mortifications more numerous; his prayers and penance more rigid and more frequent; and that which was but the result of the weakness of

human nature, conscious of its frailty, added new lustre to the reputation of the saint, and excited a warmer reverence for the virtues of the man. Accustomed to pursue the bold wanderings of the human mind, upon subjects whose awful mystery escapes all human research, intense study finally gave place to ceaseless meditation. Connecting, or endeavouring to connect, his incongruous ideas, by abstract principles, he lost sight of fact, in pursuit of inference; and, excluded from all social intercourse, from all active engagement, his ardent imagination became his ruling faculty, while the wild magnificence of the scenes by which he was surrounded, threw its correspondent influence on his disordered mind; and all within, and all with-

out his monastery, contributed to cherish and to perpetuate the religious melancholy and gloomy enthusiasm of his character. More zealous in his faith at twenty-six than he had been at eighteen, it yet no longer opened to his view the heaven which smiled upon his head; but, beneath his feet, an abyss which seemed ready to engulf him. He sometimes wildly talked of evil deeds which crossed his brain; of evil passions which shook his frame; and doubted if the mercy of his Redeemer extended to him, whose sinless life was not a sufficient propitiation for sinful thoughts: and this sensitive delicacy of a morbid conscience plunged him into habitual sadness, while it added to his holy fame, and excited a still higher

eneration for his character, in those who were the witnesses of its perfection.

He frequently spent days, devoted to religious exercises, in the gloomy woods of the monastery; and the monk, who, from kindness or from curiosity, pursued his wanderings, sometimes found him cradled on a beetling cliff, rocked by the rising storm; sometimes buried amidst the ruins of the Moorish castle, the companion of the solitary bittern; and sometimes hanging over the lake, whose subterraneous thunder scared all ears but his.

The change which had gradually taken place in the character and

manners of the monk had long awakened the attention of the Prior and the brotherhood of St. Francis; but such was the veneration he had established for his character, by the austerity of his life, and the superiority of his genius, by the rank he had sacrificed, and the dignity he had retained, that his associates sought not in natural or moral causes for the source of effects so striking and so extraordinary: they said, "It is the mysterious workings of divine grace; it is a vocation from Heaven; a miracle is about to be wrought, and it is reserved for a member of the order of St. Francis to perform it."

These observations had reached the ears of the Father Hilarion, when

those who pronounced them believed him lost in spiritual meditation; they became imprinted on his mind; they fastened on his imagination; they occupied his waking thought, and influenced his broken dream. It was in one of those suspensions of the senses, when a doubtful sleep unlinks the ideas, without wholly subduing the powers of the mind, that he fancied a favourite dove had flown from his bosom, where it was wont to nestle, towards the east; that, suddenly endowed with the power of flight, he pursued the bird of peace through regions of air, till he beheld its delicate form absorbed in the effulgence of the rising sun, whose splendour shone so intensely on him, that, even when he awoke, he still

felt its warmth, and shrank beneath its brightness. He perceived, also, that the dove, which had been the subject of his vision, and which had drooped and pined during the preceding day, lay dead upon his bosom. This dream made a strong impression on his mind. The effects of that impression were betrayed in a discourse which he delivered on the eve of the festival of St. Hilariion. He took for his subject the life of Paul, whom he called the first missionary. He spoke of the faith of the apostle, not as it touched himself only, but as to its beneficent relations towards others.

In the picture which he had drawn, the monks perceived the

state of his own mind. They said, "It is not of St. Paul alone he speaks, but of himself; he is consumed with an insatiable thirst for the conversion of souls; for the dilatation and honour of the kingdom of Christ. It is through him that the heretical tenets of the Jesuits will be confounded and exposed. Let us honour ourselves and our order, by promoting his inspired views." In a few days, therefore, his mission to India was determined on. Arrangements for his departure were effected, permission from the Governor of the order to leave the convent was obtained, and he repaired to Lisbon, to procure the necessary credentials for his perilous enterprise.

After a separation of fifteen years, the Father Hilarion appeared before his guardian uncle, and his brother, the Duke d'Acugna; and never did a mortal form present a finer image of what man was, when God first created him after his own likeness, and sin had not yet effaced the glorious impress of the Divinity. Nature stood honoured in this most perfect model of her power; and the expression of the best and highest of the human passions would have marred that pure and splendid character of look, which seemed to belong to something beyond the high perfection of human power or of human genius. Lofty and dignified in his air, there was an aspiring grandeur in the figure of the Monk, which resembled the transfiguration

of mortal into heavenly greatness : and, though his eagle-eye, when raised from earth, flashed all the fire of inspiration ; yet, when again it sunk in holy meekness, the softer excellence of heavenly mercy hung its tender traits upon his pensive brow ; his up-turned glance beaming the heroic fortitude of the martyr ; his down-cast look, the tender sympathies of the saint ; each, respectively, marking the heroism of a great soul, prepared to suffer and to resist ; the sensibility of a feeling heart, created to pity and to relieve ; indicating a character, formed upon that bright model, which so intimately associated the attributes of the God with the feelings of the man.

The Duke and the Archbishop stood awed in the presence of this extraordinary being. They secretly smiled at what they deemed the romance of his intentions; but they had not the courage to oppose them: they were rich in worldly arguments, against an enterprise so full of danger, and so destitute of recompense; but how could they offer them to one, who breathed not of this world; to whom earthly passions, and earthly views, were alike unknown; who already seemed to belong to that heaven, to which he was about to lead millions of erring creatures: all, therefore, that was reserved for them to effect, was, to throw a splendour over his mission, correspondent to his illustrious rank; and, in spite of the intrigues

of the Jesuits, the reluctance of the Spanish vice-reine, and the wishes of the minister, Miguel Vasconcellas, the united influence of the houses of Braganza and Acugna procured a brief from the Pope's legate, then resident in Lisbon, constituting a Franciscan monk apostolic nuncio in India, and appointing Goa, then deemed the bulwark of Christianity, in Hindostan, the centre of his mission.

Followed to the shore by a multitude of persons, who beheld in the apostolic nuncio another Francis Xavierius, the Father Hilarion embarked with the Indian fleet, on board the admiral's ship, which also carried the governor-general, recently appointed to the government

of Goa. The Nuncio was accompanied by a coadjutor, a young man strongly recommended by the Archbishop of Braga, a Jesuit, and the professed enemy of the Franciscans, who had obtained the appointment of his protégé by his influence with the minister.

During the voyage, the rank and character of the Missionary procured him the particular attentions of the Viceroy; but the man of God was not to be tempted to mingle with the profane crowd which surrounded the man of the world. Devoted to a higher communion, his soul only stooped from heaven to earth, to relieve the sufferings he pitied, or to correct the errors he condemned; to substitute peace for

animosity ; to restrain the blasphemies of the profane ; to dispel the darkness of the ignorant ; to support the sick ; to solace the wretched ; to strengthen the weak, and to encourage the timid ; to watch, to pray, to fast, and to suffer for all. Such was the occupation of a life, active as it was sinless.

Such was the tenour of a conduct, which raised him, in the estimation of those who witnessed its excellence, to the character of a saint ; but endeared him still more to their hearts, as a man who mingled sympathy with relief, and who added to the awful sentiment of veneration he inspired, the tender feeling of gratitude his mild benevolence was calculated to awaken.

Yet, over this bright display of virtues, scarcely human, one trait of conduct, something less than saintly, threw a transient shadow. He had disgraced the coadjutor from his appointment, for an irregularity of conduct almost venial from the circumstances connected with it. With him, virtue was not a relative, but an abstract quality, referable only to love of Deity, and independent of human temptation and mortal events; he, therefore, publicly rebuked the coadjutor as a person unworthy to belong to the congregation of the mission. He said, "Let us be merciful to all but to ourselves; it is not by our preaching alone we can promote the sacred cause in which we have embarked—it is also by our example." Even

the mediation of the Viceroy was urged in vain. Firm of purpose, rigid, inflexible, he acted only from conviction, the purest and the strongest; but once resolved, his decree was immutable as the law of the God he served. His severe justice added to the veneration he inspired; but as he wept while he condemned, it detracted nothing from the general sentiment of affection he excited.

The voyage had been far from prosperous. The fleet had suffered much from repeated storms; and danger the most imminent, accompanied by all those awful appearances, with which conflicting elements strike terror into the boldest heart, had betrayed in the sufferers

exposed to their rage, all the symptoms of human weakness, reduced to a feeling sense of its own insignificance, by impending destruction, under the most terrific and awful forms of divine power. The Missionary, alone, seemed uninfluenced by the threatened approach of that dreadful and untimely death, to which he stood exposed, in common with others. Calm and firm, his counsel and exertions alike displayed the soul incapable of fear; to whom life was indifferent, and for whom death had no terrors while his frame, as if partaking the immortality of his soul, resisted the influence of fatigue, and the vicissitudes of the elements. He met, unappalled, the midnight storm; he beheld, unmoved, the tumultuous

billows, which rushed loudly on, pouring destruction in their course, and bore, with uncomplaining firmness, the chilling cold of Cape Verd, the burning heats of Guinea, and the pestilential vapours of the line.

It was on the first day of the sixth month of the voyage, that the fleet sailed up the Indian seas, and, through the clear bright atmosphere, the shores and mighty regions of the East presented themselves to the view, while the imagination of the Missionary, escaping beyond the limits of human vision, stretched over those various and wondrous tracts, so diversified by clime and soil, by government and by religion, and which present to the contemplation of philosophy a boundless

variety in form and spirit. Towards the west, it rested on the Arochosian mountains, which divide the territories of Persia from those of India—primæval mountains! whose wondrous formation preceded that of all organic matter, coequal with the globe which bears them! and which still embosom, in their stupendous shades, a nest of warlike states, rude as the aspects of their native regions, and wild as the storms that visit them; the descendants of those warrior hordes, which once spread desolation over the eastern hemisphere, till the powerful genius of an individual triumphed over the combined forces of nations, and the Affigans found, that the natural bulwark of their native mountains

was alone a sufficient barrier against the victorious arms of Tamerlane.

From the recollection of the character and prowess of the Tartar hero, the mind of the Missionary turned towards the shores, which were rather imagined than perceived in so great an interval of distance ; and the Impostor of Mecca occurred to his recollection, with the scenes of his nativity and success. Bold in error, dauntless in imposition, enslaving the moral freedom while he subverted the natural liberty of mankind, and spreading, by the force of his single and singular genius, the wild doctrines he had invented, over the greatest empires of the earth, from the shores of the Atlantic to the walls of China ; his

success appeared even more wondrous, and his genius more powerful, than that of the Tartar conqueror. The soul of the Missionary swelled in the contemplation of scenes so calculated to elevate the ideas, to inflame the imagination, and to recall the memory to those æras in time, to those events in human history, which stimulate, by their example, the powers of latent genius, rouse the dormant passions into action, and excite man to sow the seeds of great and distant events, to found empires, or to destroy them.

His spirit, awakening to a new impulse, partook, for a moment, the sublimity of the objects he contemplated; the force of the characters

he reflected on, and, expanding with its elevation, mingled with the universe. He remembered, that he, too, might have been an hero ; he, too, might have founded states, and given birth to doctrines ; for what had Timur boasted, or Mahomet possessed ; that nature had denied to him ? A frame of Herculean mould ; a soul of fire ; a mind of infinite resource ; energy to impel ; genius to execute ; an arm to strike ; a tongue to persuade ; and a vital activity of spirit to give impulse and motion to the whole :—such were the endowments, which, coming from God himself, give to man so dangerous an ascendant over his species ; and such were his. For the first time, his energy of feeling, his enthusiasm of fancy, received a new

object for its exercise. He pursued, with an eagle glance, the sun's majestic course : " To-day," he said, " it rose upon the Pagoda of Brahma ; it hastens to gild, with equal rays, the temple once dedicated to its own divinity, in the deserts of Palmyra ; to illumine the Caaba of Mecca ; and to shine upon the tabernacle of Jerusalem ! " He started at the climax. The empires of the earth, and the genius of man, suddenly faded from his mind ; he thought of Him, in whose eye empire was a speck, and man an atom ; he stood self-accused, humbled, awed ; and invoked the protection of Him, who reigns only in perfect love in that heart, where worldly ambition has ceased to linger, and

from whence human passions have long been exterminated.

The vessel in which he had embarked, was among the last to reach the port of Goa; and the reputation of his sanctity, and the history of his rank, his genius, and his mission, had preceded his arrival. The places under the civil and ecclesiastical government of Goa, were filled by Spaniards, but the Portuguese constituted the mass of the people*. They groaned under the tyranny of the Spanish Jesuits, and they heard,

* The misfortune of Portugal being united to the kingdom of Spain after the death of Cardinal Henry, uncle to the King Sebastian, gave a terrible blow to the Portuguese power in the Indies.
—Guzon, *Histoire des Indes Orientales*.

with a rapture which their policy should have taught them to conceal, that an apostolic nuncio, of the royal line of Portugal, and of the order of St. Francis, was come to visit their settlements, to correct the abuses of the church, and to pursue the task of conversion, by means more consonant to the evangelical principles of a mild and pure religion. An enthusiast multitude rushed to the shore, to hail his arrival: the splendid train of the Viceroy was scarcely observed; and the man of God, who disclaimed the pomp of all worldly glory, exclusively received it. He moved slowly on, in all the majesty of religious meekness: awful in his humility—commanding in his subjection: his finely formed head, unshaded, even by

his cowl; his naked feet unshrinking from the sharpness of the stony pavement; the peace of Heaven stamped on his countenance; and the cross he had taken up, pressed to his bosom. All that could touch in the saint, or impose in the man, breathed around him: the sublimity of religion, and the splendour of beauty, the purity of faith, and the dignity of manhood; grace and majesty, holiness and simplicity, diffusing their combined influence over his form and motions, his look and air.

He passed before the residence of the Grand Inquisitor, who stood, surrounded by his ecclesiastical court, at a balcony, and witnessed this singular procession. At the

moment when the Missionary reached the portals of a Carmelite monastery, where he was to take up his residence, the monks approached to receive him; the multitude called for his benediction: ere he retired from its view he bestowed it; and never had the sacred ceremony been performed with a zeal so touching, with an enthusiasm so devout, with a look, an attitude, an air so pure, so tender, so holy, and so inspired. The portals closed upon the saint; and those who had touched the hem of his garment, believed themselves peculiarly favoured by Heaven.

The next day he received an audience from the Bishop and Grand Inquisitor of Goa; marked by a distinction due to his rank; but

characterized by a coldness, and by some invidious observations, little consonant to the enthusiasm of his own character, and unbefitting an enterprise so laudable and magnanimous as that in which he had engaged.—The Missionary, disgusted with all he saw and all he heard, with the luxury and pomp of the ecclesiastical court, and with the chilling haughtiness and illiberal sentiments of those who presided over it, and who openly condemned the tenets of the order to which he belonged * ; quickly resolved on an

* The power of that formidable ecclesiastic, the Inquisitor General, is very terrible ; and extends to persons of all ranks—the Viceroy, Archbishop, and his vicar, excepted. — See HAMILTON'S New Account of the East Indies.

immediate departure from Goa. A few days, however, were requisite to arrange the circumstances necessary for the promotion of his mission. His vow of poverty related only to himself; but his mission required worldly means, as well as divine inspiration, to effect its beneficent purpose; and the charity which became a duty towards persons of his own order in Christendom, must, in a country where his religion was not known, depend upon the casualty of natural feeling: something, therefore, which belonged to earth, entered into an enterprise which referred ultimately to heaven; and the saint was obliged to provide for the contingencies of the prelate and the man.

The route which he laid out for his mission, was from Tatta to Lahore, by the course of the Indus, and from Lahore to the province of Cashmire. To fix upon this remote and little known province, as the peculiar object of his mission, was an idea belonging to that higher order of genius, which grasps, by a single view, what mediocrity contemplates in detail, or considers impracticable in accomplishment. To penetrate into those regions, which the spirit of invasion, or the enterprise of commerce, had never yet reached; to pass that boundary, which the hallowed footstep of Christianity had never yet consecrated; to preach the doctrine of a self-denying faith, in the land of perpetual enjoyment; and, amidst the luxurious

shades, which the Indian fancy contemplates as the model of its own heavenly Indra, to attack, in the birth-place of Brahma, the vital soul of a religion, supposed to have existed by its enthusiast votary beyond all æra of human record, beyond all reach of human tradition, which had so long survived the vicissitudes of time, the shock of conquest, and the persecution of intolerance: this was a view of a bold and an enthusiastic mind, confident in the powers of a genius which would rise with the occasion, and superior to all earthly obstacles, which might oppose its efforts; of a mind, to be incited, rather than to be repelled, by difficulties; to be animated, rather than subdued, by danger.

The person, the character, the life, the eloquence of the Missionary, were all calculated to awaken a popular feeling in his favour; and, during the few weeks he remained at Goa, the confessional from which he absolved, and the pulpit whence he preached, became the shrines of popular devotion.

His eloquence was irresistible : it was the language of fearless genius, of enthusiastic zeal ; vehement and impassioned, it ever aspired at the pathetic, or reached the sublime ; and if it were, sometimes, more dazzling than judicious, more affecting than correct, still it persuaded when it failed to convince, still it was distinguished by those touches of tenderness, by those visions of

enthusiasm, which blend and assimilate, so intimately, with human feeling, which ever address themselves, with such invariable success, to human passion!

The departure of the Nuncio from Goa was attended by circumstances which accorded not with the character of the apostle of Him, who, in approaching the spot whence he was to announce his divine mission to the rulers of the people, "came riding on an ass;" for the departure of the Missionary was triumphant and splendid. The most illustrious of the Portuguese families in Goa attended in his train, and the homage of the multitude pursued him to the shore, whence he was to embark for Tatta. He moved meekly

on in the midst of the crowd; but through the profound humility of his countenance shone such magnanimity of soul, such perfect consciousness of a genius and a zeal equal to the sacred enterprise in which he had embarked, that the most favourable presages were formed of the success of a man, who seemed to blend, in his character, the piety of the saint with the energy of the hero. He embarked:—the anchor was raised; a favourable breeze swelled the sails. The Missionary stood on the deck, dignified, but not unmoved: the triumph of religion, softened by its meekness, sat on his brow! The happy auspices under which he had left the centre of his mission, promised him a return still more triumphant:

his soul swelled with emotions, which diffused themselves over his countenance; and as the vessel receded from the shore, his ear still caught the murmured homage offered to his unrivalled excellence. The humility of the monk rejected the unmerited tribute; but the heart of the man throbbed with an ardour, not all saintly, as he received it; and the pious visionary, who attempted, by an abstraction of mind, to love God, without enjoying the pleasure which accompanies that love, now, with a natural feeling, superior to the influence of a stoical zeal, unconsciously rejoiced, even in the suffrages of man.



CHAPTER III.

ON the evening of the day in which the apostolic Nuncio arrived at Tatta, he embarked on the Indus, in a bungalow of twelve oars, for Lahore. He beheld, not without emotion, the second mightiest stream of the East; sacred in the religious traditions of the regions through which it flows, and memorable from its connexion with the most striking events in the history of the world; whose course became a guide to the spirit of fearless enterprise, and first opened to the conqueror of Asia a glimpse of those climes which have since been so intimately connected with the interests of Europe, which have so

materially contributed to the wealth and luxury of modern states, and so obviously influenced the manners and habits of western nations. The scenery of the shores of the Indus changed its character with each succeeding day; its devious waters bathed, in their progress, the trackless deserts of Sivii, whose burning winds are never refreshed by the dews of happier regions; or fertilized the mangroves of the Moultan; or poured through the wild unprofitable jungle, glittering amidst its long and verdant tresses, which so often shelter the wary tiger, or give asylum to the wild boar, when pursued to its entangled grass by the spear of the Indian huntsman. Sometimes its expansive bosom reflected images of rural beauty, or warlike splendour; and Hindu villages, surround-

ed by luxuriant sugar-canes and rice-grounds, rich in plenteous harvest, and diversified by all the brilliant hues of a florid vegetation, were frequently succeeded by the lofty towers of a Mogul fortress, or the mouldering ramparts of a Rajah castle; by the minarets of a mosque; peering amidst the shades of the mourning cypress; or the cupolas of a pagoda, shining through the luxurious foliage of the maringo, or plantain-tree; while the porpoise, tossing on the surface of the stream, basked in the setting sun-beam; or the hideous gurreal, voracious after prey, chased the affrighted fisherman, who, urging his canoe before the terrific monster, gave to a scene, wrapt in the solemn stillness of evening, an awful animation. Some-

times, when the innoxious shores awakened confidence, groups of simple Indians were seen, in the cool of those delicious evenings which succeed to burning days, offering their devotions on the banks of the stream, or plunging eagerly into its wave; the refreshing pleasure derived from the act, communicating itself to the soul and the frame, and both, in the belief of the enthusiast votarist, becoming purified by the immersion.

As the vessel glided down that branch of the Indus called the Ravii, every object, to the imagination of the Missionary, became consecrated to the memory of the enterprise of Alexander; and, while the same scenes, the same forms, habits, dress, and manners, met his

view, as had two thousand years before struck the minds of the Macedonians with amazement, his historic knowledge enabled him to trace, with accuracy, and his reflecting mind, with interest, those particular spots, where Alexander fought, where Alexander conquered!

Arrived at Lahore, he entered one of the most magnificent cities of the East, at a period when the unfortunate and royal Dara had sought it as an asylum, while he waited for the forces, led by his heroic son, Solyman, previously to the renewal of their exertions for the recovery of an empire, wrested from them by the successful genius of Aurengzebe *.

* Dara having advanced beyond the river Bea, took possession of Lahore; giving his

Lahore, at that period, formed the boundary of Christian enterprise in India; and the Jesuits had not only founded a convent there, but were permitted, by the tolerant Gentiles, publicly to perform their sacred functions, and to enjoy, with unrestrained freedom, the exercises of their religion*. The Missionary was received by the order, with the respect due to his sacred diploma

army time to breathe; in that city, he employed himself in levying troops and in collecting the imperial revenue.—Dow's History of Hindostan, vol. iii. p. 274.

* “Autre fois les Jesuites avoient un établissement dans cette ville, et remplissoient leurs fonctions sacrés, et offroient aux yeux des Mahometans et des Gentiles, la pœmp de leurs fêtes.”—BERNIER.

and royal briefs; but neither his principles, nor the rigid discipline of his life, would permit him to reside with men, whose relaxed manners, and disorderly conduct, flung an odium on the purity of the religion, to which they were supposed to have devoted themselves. It was his ambition to make for himself a distinct and distinguished character; and, like the missionaries of old, or those pious sannyasies so highly venerated in India, he pitched his tent on the skirts of a neighbouring forest, and interested the attentions of the Indians, by the purity of a life, which shocked neither their ancient usages nor popular opinions; and which, from its self-denial and abstemious virtue,

harmonized with their best and highest ideas of human excellence*.

At Lahore he was determined to remain until he had made himself master of the dialects of Upper India, where the pure Hindu was deemed primeval; and his previous knowledge of the Hebrew and Arabic tongues, soon enabled him to

* Monsieur de Thevenot speaks of a convent of religious Hindus, at Lahore: they have a general, provincial, and other superiors; they make vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty; they live on alms, and have lay brothers to beg for them; they eat but once a day; the chief tenet of their order is, to avoid doing to others, what they would not themselves wish to endure; they suffer injuries with patience, and do not return a blow; and they are forbidden even to *look* on women.

conquer the difficulties of the task to which he devoted himself, with an ardour, proportioned to the enthusiasm of his genius and the zeal of his enterprise. He had placed himself under the tuition of a learned Pundit, who was devoted to secular business, and had travelled into various countries of the East, as a secretary and interpreter. A follower of the Musnavi sect, or "worship of the Invisible," the religion of the philosophers of Hindostan, he yet gave his public sanction to doctrines which he secretly despised. To him, the wildest fictions and most rational tenets of the Brahminical theology appeared equally puerile; but the apprehension of "loss of cast" (an excommunication which involves every

worldly evil) restrained the avowal of his sentiments, and secured his attention to forms and ceremonies, which were the objects of his secret derision. A Cashmirian by birth, he was endowed with all the acuteness of mind which peculiarly distinguishes his country ; and equally indifferent to all religions, he was yet anxious to forward the Christian's views, whose doctrines he estimated, by the character of him who preached them.

Although Cashmire was the principal object of Hilarion's mission, his zeal, no longer impeded by his ignorance of the language of those whom he was to address, already broke forth, accompanied by that brilliant enthusiasm, by that power-

ful eloquence, whose influence is invariable on popular feelings: he resorted to places of public meetings, to consecrated tanks, and to the courts of a pagoda. The tolerance of the followers of Brahma evinced itself, in the indulgence with which the innovating tenets of the Christian were received. They molested not a man, who thus daringly appeared among them, openly to dispute the doctrines of a faith, interwoven with the very existence of its professors: but a few of the lower casts only assembled around him, and even they listened to him with less conviction than curiosity*.

* A Hindu considers all the distinctions and privileges of his cast, as belonging to him by an incommunicable right; and to convert, or

and indolently rejected what they took not the trouble to examine or to dispute.

It was in vain, that the apostolic Nuncio sought an opportunity to converse with the learned and distinguished Brahmins of the province: his Pundit, whose confirmed deism set all hope of conversion at defiance, assured his pupil, that the highest class of that sacred order,

be converted, are ideas equally repugnant to the principles, most deeply rooted in his mind; nor can either the Catholic or Protestant Missionaries in India, boast of having overcome those prejudices, except among a few of the lower casts, or of such as have lost their caste altogether.—*Voyages aux Indes par M. SONNERAT*, tom. i. p. 58.

who always adopt the sacerdotal stole, were seldom to be seen by Europeans, or by persons of any nation but their own. Acting as high-priests, devoted to religious discipline, in private families of distinction, or shut up in their colleges, when not engaged in the offices of their religion, they gave themselves up, exclusively, to the cultivation of literature, and to the study of logic and metaphysics, so prevalent in their schools, resembling, in the simplicity and virtue of their lives, the ascetics of the middle ages ; except when they became elevated to some high dignity in their ancient and sacred hierarchy, and were then called upon, during certain seasons, to appear in the world, with all the imposing splen-

dour and religious pomp, which peculiarly belongs to their distinguished rank and venerated profession.

While he spoke, the Pundit drew from his breast a gazette of the court of Delhi* ; and read, from what might be deemed a literary curiosity, the following paragraph :
“ The holy and celebrated Brahmin, Rah-Singh, the incarnation of Brahma upon earth, and the light of all knowledge, has been lately en-

* Gazettes de la cour de Delhi, des nouvelles publiques qui marquent, jour par jour, et non dans ce stile ampoullé qu'on reproche aux Orientaux, ce qui se passe d'importante à la cour et dans les provinces—ces sont de gazettes repandues dans toute l'empire.—ANQUETIL DU PERRON, p. 47.

gaged in performing the Upaseyda* through the provinces of Agra and Delhi, from whence he returns by Lahore to Cashmire, the resemblance of paradise, by the attraction of the favour of Heaven. The Guru is accompanied by the daughter of his daughter, who has adopted the sacerdotal stole, and has become a Brachmachira. The reputation of her holiness has spread itself over the earth, and her prophecies are rays of light from Heaven."

The Pundit, then putting aside the gazette, said, "This Guru, or bishop, who holds an high jurisdic-

* A ceremony similar to that of confirmation in the Catholic church.

tion over all which relates to his cast, has long survived those powers of intellect, from which his brilliant reputation arose ; and his influence must have wholly declined, had it not been supported by the merited celebrity of his grand-daughter : he has brought her up in the Vedanti sect, which he himself professes, the religion of mystic love : a creed finely adapted to the warm imagination, the tender feelings, and pure principles of an Indian woman ; and which, sublime and abstracted, harmonizes with every idea of human loveliness and human grace."

"And what," demanded the Missionary, "are its leading tenets?"

* That matter has no essence, independent of mental perception; and that external sensation would vanish into nothing, if the divine energy for a moment subsided: that the soul differs in degree, but not in kind, from the creative spirit of which it is a particle, and into which it will be finally absorbed: that nothing has a pure and absolute existence, but spirit: and that a passionate and exclusive love of Heaven is that feeling only, which offers no illusion to the soul, and secures its eternal felicity."

"This doctrine, so pure, and so sublime," replied the Missionary, "wants but the holy impress of revelation, to stamp it as divine."

The Pundit answered : “ The religion of Brahma, under all its various sects and forms, is peculiarly distinguished by sublimity, and even the utmost extravagance of its apparent polytheism is resolvable into the unity of deity ; while the mythological fables it offers to the credence of the multitude are splendid and poetical, like the forms and ceremonies of its religious duties. Of those you will be able to judge to-morrow, as the Guru of Cashmire enters Lahore, to perform the ceremony of the Upaseyda, in the Pagoda of Crishna ; where, after having distributed the holy waters, he will hear the learned men of the province dispute on theological subjects. As this is considered the grand field for acquiring

distinguished reputation among the Brahmins and literati of India, it is at this period, that you may seize on an opportunity of advancing your doctrines, as, by throwing off your European habit, and undergoing purification in the consecrated tanks of the temple, you become qualified to enter its vestibule."

To this proposal, the Missionary made no reply. He seemed lost in profound thought, but it was thought animated by some new and powerful excitement. His eye flashed fire, his countenance brightened, his whole frame betrayed the agitations of a mind roused to extraordinary exertion; the ambition of genius, and the enthusiasm of religious zeal, mingled in his look.

The Pundit secretly observed the effects of his proposal, and withdrew. The Missionary, during the rest of the night, gave himself up to meditation and to prayer. Visions of a victorious zeal poured on his mind, and pious supplications offered to Heaven, for their accomplishment, breathed on his lips.

CHAPTER IV.

THE day on which the Guru of Cashmire made his entrance into Lahore, was a day of public festivity and joyous agitation to its inhabitants. The higher casts, the Brahmjns and Chitterries, went out by the gate of Agra to meet him, some mounted on camels splendidly caparisoned; others reposing in palanquins, luxuriously adorned. At sunrise, the sacred procession appeared descending an eminence towards the town. The religious attendants of the Guru, mounted on Arabian horses, led the van; fol-

lowed by the Ramganny, or dancing priestesses of the temple, who sung, as they proceeded, the histories of their gods, while incarnate upon earth. Their movements were slow, languid, and graceful; and their hymns, accompanied by the tamboora, the seringa, and other instruments, whose deep, soft, and solemn tones, seem consecrated to the purposes of a tender and fanciful religion, excited in the souls of their auditors, emotions which belonged not all to Heaven.

This group, which resembled, in form and movement, the personification of the first hours of Love and Youth, was succeeded by the Guru, mounted on an elephant, which moved with a majestic pace ;

his howdah, of pure gold, sparkling to the radiance of the rising day. Disciples of the Brahmin surrounded his elephant, and were immediately followed by a palanquin, which from its simplicity formed a striking contrast to the splendid objects that had preceded it. Its drapery, composed of the snowy muslin of the country, shone like the fleecy vapour on which the sun's first light reposes: its delicate shafts were entwined with the caressing fibres of the camalata, the flower of the Indian heaven, dedicated to Camdeo, the god of "mystic love," whose crimson blossoms breathed of odours which soothed, rather than intoxicated, the senses.

The acclamations which had rent the air on the appearance of the Guru, died softly away as the palanquin approached. An awe more profound, a feeling more pure, more sublimated, seemed to take possession of the multitude; for, indistinctly seen through the transparent veil of the palanquin, appeared the most sacred of vestals, the Prophetess and Brachmachira of Cashmire. Her perfect form, thus shrouded, caught, from the circumstance, a mysterious charm, and seemed, like one of the splendid illusions, with which the enthusiasm of religion brightens the holy dream of its votarist, like the spirit which descends amidst the shadows of night upon the slumbers of the blessed. Considered as the off-

spring of Brahma, as a ray of the divine excellence, the Indians of the most distinguished rank drew back as she approached, lest their very breath should pollute that region of purity her respiration consecrated; and the odour of the sacred flowers, by which she was adorned, was inhaled with an eager devotion, as if it purified the soul it almost seemed to penetrate. The venerated palanquin was guarded by a number of pilgrim women, and the chief casts of the inhabitants of Lahore; while a band of the native troops closed the procession, which proceeded to the Pagoda of Crishna.

From the contemplation of a spectacle so new, so unexpected, the

Missionary retired within his solitary tent, with that feeling of horror and disgust, which a profanation of the sentiment and purposes of religion might be supposed to excite, in a mind so pure, so zealous, so far above all the pomp and passions of life, and hitherto so ignorant of all the images connected with their representation. The music, the perfumes, the women, the luxury, and the splendour of the extraordinary procession, offended his piety, and almost disordered his imagination. He thought, for a moment, of the perils of an enterprise, undertaken in a country where the very air was unfavourable to virtue, and where all breathed a character of enjoyment, even over the awful sanctity of religion; a spe-

cies of enjoyment, to whose very existence he had been, hitherto, almost a stranger ; but the genius of his zeal warmed in proportion to the obstacles he found he had to encounter, and he waited impatiently for the arrival of the Pundit, who was to lead him to the vestibule of the pagoda.

They proceeded, before mid-day, to the temple, which was approached through several avenues of lofty trees. On every side marble basins, filled with consecrated water, reflected from their brilliant surfaces, the domes and galleries of the pagoda. On every side the golden flowers of the assoca, the tree of religious rites, shed their rich and intoxicating odours.

In submission to those prejudices, which he could only hope finally to vanquish by previously respecting, he suffered himself to be led to a consecrated tank, and, having bathed, he assumed the Indian jama. As he passed the portals of the pagoda, he was struck by the grotesque figure of an idol, before whose shrine a crowd of deluded votarists lay prostrate : he turned away his eyes in horror, kissed the crucifix which was concealed within the folds of his dress, and proceeded to the vestibule of the temple. The ceremony of the day was concluded ; the priestesses had performed their religious dances before Crishna, the Indian Apollo, and idol of the temple ; the usual offerings of fruit and flowers, of gold and precious odours, had been

made at his shrine ; and the learned of the various sects of the Brahminical faith had assembled, at an awful distance round the Guru, to hold their religious disputation and controversial arguments.

In the centre of the vestibule, and on an elevated cushion, reposed the venerable form of the Brahmin. His beard of snow fell beneath his girdle ; an air, still, calm, and motionless, diffused itself over his aged figure ; a mild and holy abstraction involved his tranquil countenance ; no trace of human passions furrowed his expansive brow ; all was the repose of nature, the absence of mortality ; and he presented to the fancy and the mind, a fine and noble image of that venerated God, an

incarnation of whose excellence he believed himself to be. A railing of gold and ebony marked the hallowed boundary, which none were permitted to pass, save the Prophetess of Cashmire. *She* sat near him, veiled only by that religious mystery of air and look, which involved her person, as though a cloud of evening mists threw its soft shadows round her. Forbidden the use of ornaments, by her profession, except that of consecrated flowers, the scarlet berries of the sweet sumbal, the flower of the Ganges, alone enwreathed her brow; a string of mogrees, whose odour exceeded the ottar of the rose, encircled her neck, with the dsandam, or three Brahminical threads, the distinguishing insignia of her distin-

guished cast*. Her downcast eyes were fixed upon the muntras, the Indian rosary, which were twined round her wrist; and o'er whose beads she softly murmured the Gay-atras, or text of the Shaster. And when, with a slight motion of the head, she threw back the dark shining tresses which shaded her brow, in the centre of her forehead appeared the small consecrated mark of the tallertum. So finely was her form and attitude contrasted by the venerable figure of her aged grandsire, that the spring of eternal youth seemed to diffuse its immortal bloom and freshness round her, and she looked like the tutelar intelligence of

* From the time that they assume the dsandam, they are called the Brahmasaris, or children of Brahma.

the Hindu mythology, newly descended on earth, from the radiant sphere assigned to her in the Indian zodiac.

At a little distance from the railing, stood the pilgrim-women who attended on the chief Priestess, fanning the air with peacock's feathers, and diffusing around an atmosphere of roses, from the musky tresses and fragrant flowers of the Brachmachira. On either side of the vestibule stood groups of the various sects of Brahma and of Bhudda, while pilgrims and faquirs, with the chief casts of Lahore, filled the bottom of the vast and mighty hall.

The religious disputants spoke in orderly succession, without appearing to feel or to excite enthusiasm, con-

tented to detail their own doctrines, rather than anxious to controvert the doctrines of others. A devotee of the Musnavi sect took the lead; he praised the mysteries of the Bhagavat, and explained the profound allegory of the six Ragas*, who, wedded to immortal nymphs, and fathers of lovely genii, presided in the Brahminical mythology over the seasons. A disciple of the Vedanti school spoke of the transports of mystic love, and maintained the existence of spirit only; while a follower of Bhudda supported the doctrine of matter, as the only system void of all illusion. One spoke of the fifth element, or subtle spirit,

* The "Raga Mala," or Necklace of Melody, contains a highly poetical description of the Ragas and their attendant nymphs.

which causes universal attraction, so that the most minute particle is impelled to some particular object ; and another, of the great soul which attended the birth of all embodied creatures, connecting it with the divine essence which pervades the universe ; while all, involved in mysteries beyond the comprehension of human reason, or lost in the intricacies of metaphysical theories, betrayed, in their respective doctrines, the wreck of that abstract learning, which, too little connected with the true happiness of society, was anciently borrowed, even by the Greeks themselves, from the sages of India, and by the partial revival of which, even the philosophers of modern Europe once made a false, but distinguished reputation.

It was during a pause which followed the declaration of the last-mentioned tenets, that the apostolic Nuncio suddenly appeared in the midst of the vestibule. His lofty and towering figure, the kindling lustre of his countenance, the high command which sat upon his brow, the bright enthusiasm which beamed within his eye, and the dignified and religious meekness which distinguished his air and attitude, all formed a fine and striking contrast to the slight diminutive forms, the sallow hues, and timid sadness, of the Indians who surrounded him. Clad in a white robe, his fine-formed head and feet uncovered, he looked like the spirit of Truth descended from heaven, to spread on earth its pure and radiant light.

The impression of his appearance was decisive: it sank at once to the soul; and he imposed conviction on the senses, ere he made his claim on the understanding. He spoke, and the multitude pressed near him—he spoke of the religion of Brahma, of the Avaratas, or incarnations of its founder, and of those symbolic images of the divine attributes, beneath whose mysterious veil a pure system of natural religion was visible, which, though inevitably dark, uncertain, and obscure, was not unworthy to receive upon its gloom the light of a divine revelation: then, raising his hands and eyes to heaven, and touching the earth with his bended knee, he invoked the protection of the God of Christians, even in the temple of

Brahma, and, surrounded by idols and by idolaters, boldly unfolded the object of his mission, and preached that word, whose divinity he was ready to attest with his blood.

His eloquence resembled, in its progress, those great elementary conflicts, whose sounds of awe come rolling grandly, deeply on, breathing the mandate of Omnipotence, and evincing its force and power; till touched, rapt, inspired by his theme, the tears of holy zeal which filled his eyes, the glow of warm enthusiasm which illumined his countenance, the strong, but pure emotions, which shook his frame, kindled around him a correspondent ardour. Some *believed*, who sought not to *comprehend*; others were persuaded, who

could not be convinced; and many admired, who had not been influenced; while all sought to conceal the effects his eloquence and his doctrine produced: for their hearts and their imaginations were still the victims of that dreadful fear, which *loss of cast* inspired; and the truths, so bright and new, now offered to their reason, were not sufficient in their effects to vanquish prejudices so dark and old, as those by which the Indian mind was held in thralldom. He ceased to speak, and all was still as death. His hands were folded on his bosom, to which his crucifix was pressed; his eyes were cast in meekness on the earth; but the fire of his zeal still played, like a ray from heaven, on his brow.

The Guru of Cashmire, who had listened to the wild mysteries of the Indian sophists, and the pure truths of the Christian Missionary, with equal composure, and, perhaps, with equal indifference, now arose to speak, and a new impulse was given to the attention of the multitude. Prejudice and habit resumed their influence, and all hung with veneration on the incoherent words pronounced by the tremulous and aged voice of a Brahmin, to whom his votarists almost paid divine honours, and who, with a motionless air and look, exclaimed: "I set my heart on the foot of Brahma, gaining knowledge only of him: it is by devotion alone, that we are enabled to see the three worlds, celestial, terrestrial, and

ethereal; let us, then, meditate eternally within our minds, and remember, that the natural duties of the children of Brahma are peace, self-restraint, patience, rectitude, and wisdom. Praise be unto Vishnu!"

He ceased:—the dome of the temple was rent with acclamations: the oracle of the north of India, his words were deemed rays of light. The rhapsody, which made no claim on the understanding, accorded with the indolence of the Indian mind:—the eloquence of the Missionary was no longer remembered; and the disciples of the Guru hastened to conduct him to the college prepared for his reception. The procession resumed its order. Incense was flung upon the air; the

choral hymn was raised by the priestesses, and the imposing splendour of the most powerful of all human superstitions, resumed its influence over minds which sought not to resist its magic force.

The apostolic Nuncio remained alone in the temple. He inhaled the fragrance of the atmosphere; he caught the languid strains of the religious women, and he beheld the splendid processions winding through the arches of the temple, and disappearing among the trees which screened its approach. At his feet lay some flowers, which fell from the palanquin of the Prophetess, as she passed him. He stood, not confounded, but yet not unmoved. The rapid vicissitude of feeling, of

emotion, which he had undergone, was so new to a mind so firm, to a soul so abstracted, that for a moment he felt as though his whole being had suffered a supernatural change. But this distraction was but momentary : the man of genius soon rallied those high unconquerable powers, which, for an instant, had bent to the impression of novel and extraordinary incidents, and had been diverted from their aspiring bias by circumstances of mere external influence. The man of God soon recovered that sacred calm, which a breast that reflected Heaven's own peace had, till now, never forfeited. He cast round his eyes, and beheld on every side disgusting images of the darkest idolatry : he shuddered, and hastened from the Pagoda. In one of its

avenues he was met by the Pundit. The Cashmirian complimented him in all the hyperbole of Eastern phrase, on the power of his unrivalled eloquence, and the force of his unanswered arguments: he said, "that it rather resembled the inspiration of Heaven, than the ability of man;" and declared, "that he believed its influence, though not general, was in some individual instances strong and decisive." The Missionary turned his eyes on him with a religious solicitude of look. "I allude," replied the Pundit, "to the Brachmachira, *the Priestess of Cashmire*, whose conversion, if once effected, might prove the redemption of her whole nation."

A deep blush crimsoned the face of the Missionary, and he involuntarily drew his hand across his eyes, though unconscious that any look beamed there which Heaven should not meet. "You are silent," said the Pundit, "and, doubtless, deem the task impracticable; and I confess it to be nearly so. This may be the last pilgrimage the Priestess will undertake, and, consequently, the last time she will ever publicly show herself; for, except when engaged in the offices of their religion, as sacerdotal women, all the females of her cast, in India, are guarded in the retirement of their zenanas, with a vigilance unknown in other countries. Habituated to this sacred privacy, the fairest Hindus sigh not after a world, of which they are

wholly ignorant. Devoted to their husbands and their gods, religion and love make up the business of their lives. Such were they, when Alexander first invaded their country—such are they now. Pure and tender, faithful and pious, zealous alike in their fondness and their faith, they immolate themselves as martyrs to both, and expire on the pile which consumes the objects of their affection, to inherit the promise which religion holds out to their hopes; for the heaven of an Indian woman is the eternal society of him whom she loved on earth. In all the religions of the East, woman has held a decided influence, either as priestess or as victim; but the women of India seem particularly adapted to the offices and influ-

ence of their faith, and in the religion of Brahma they take a considerable part. The Ramgannies, or officiating priestesses, are of an inferior rank and class, in every respect, and are much more distinguished for their zeal than for their purity; but the Brachmachira is of an order the most austere and most venerated, which can only be professed by a woman who is at once a widow* and vestal: a seeming paradox, but illustrated by the history of Luxima, the Prophetess of Cashmire.

“ Born in the most distinguished cast of India, she was betrothed, in

* See “ Duties of a faithful Widow,” translated from the Shanscrit, by H. Colebrook, Esq.

childhood, to a young Brahmin of superior rank; but, from the morning she received the golden girdle of marriage, she beheld him no more. He had devoted himself to the Tupaseya, or sacred pilgrimage, until the age of his bride should permit him to claim her. He went to the sacred Caves of Elora, he visited the Temple of Jaggarnauth, and died on his return to Cashmire, at Nurdwar, while engaged in performing penance near the source of the Ganges.

“Tender, pious, and ambitious, Luxima would have ascended the funeral pile. The tears and infirmities of her grandsire prevailed. Childless but for her, she consented

for his sake to live, and embraced the alternative held out to women in her situation of becoming a Brachmachira, being the only child of an only child. The riches of her opulent family, according to the laws of Menu, centre in herself, and are expended in such acts of public and private beneficence as are calculated to increase the popular veneration, which her extraordinary zeal, and the austere purity of her life, have awakened. To make pilgrimages, frequently to repeat the worship of her sect, and to lead a life of vestal purity, are the peculiar duties of her order. To be endowed with the spirit of prophecy is its peculiar gift. Multitudes, from every part of India, come to consult her on future events; and her vague answers are

looked upon as decisions, which, sometimes verified by chance, are seldom suffered by prepossession to be considered as false.

“ There are few of this order now existing in India, and Luxima is the most celebrated. But it is not to her zeal only she owes her unrivalled distinction : she is, by birth, a sacerdotal woman and a Cashmirian; the ascendancy of her beauty, therefore, is sometimes mistaken for the influence of the zeal which belongs to her profession ; and perhaps the Priestess too often receives an homage which the woman only excites *. She is a disciple of the Ve-

* “ Certainly,” says De Bernier, “ if one may judge of the beauty of the sacred women

danti school: the delicate ardour of her imagination finds a happy vehicle in the doctrines of her pure but fervid faith; and the sublime but impassioned tenets of religious love flow with peculiar grace from lips which seem equally consecrated to human tenderness. Every thing adds to the mystic charm which breathes o'er her character and person. Abstracted in her brilliant error, absorbed in the splendid illusion of her religious dreams, believing herself the purest incarnation of the purest spirit, her elevated soul dwells

by that of the common people, met with in the streets, they must be very beautiful." P. 96.

"The beauties of Cashmire, being born in a more northern climate, and in a purer air, retain their charms as long, at least, as any European women."—GROSSE, p. 239.

not on the sensible images by which she is surrounded, but is wholly fixed upon the heaven of her own creation; and her beauty, her enthusiasm, her graces, and her genius, alike capacitate her to propagate and support the errors of which she herself is the victim.

“ Such is the proselyte I propose to your zeal. Once converted, her example would operate like a spell on her compatriots, and the follower of Brahma would fly from the altar of his ancient gods, to worship in that temple in which she would become a votarist.”

The Pundit paused, and the Nuncio was still silent. At last he asked, “ if the Pundit had not observed, that

an interview with an Indian woman of the Brahminical cast was next to impossible?"

"It is nearly so with all Indian women of distinction," he replied; but a Brachmachira, from being more sacred than other women, excites more confidence in her friends.* To approach her would be deemed sacrilege in any cast but her own; but her obligation to perform worship to the morning and evening sun, on the banks of consecrated rivers, exposes her to the view of those who are withheld by

* The women are so sacred in India, that even the common soldiery leave them unmolested in the midst of slaughter and desolation. —Dow, History of Hindoostan, vol. iii. p. 10.

no prejudices, or restrained by no law, from approaching her."

They had now reached the Missionary's tent. The Pundit took his leave, and the Christian retired, to give himself up to the usual religious exercise of the evening.

CHAPTER V.

THE institutes of a religion which form a regular system of superstitious rites, sanctioned by all that can secure the devotion of the multitude; are rigidly observed by the followers of Brahma; and among the many splendid festivals held in honour of their gods, there is none so picturesque, and none so imposing, as that instituted in honour of Durga, the goddess of nature, whose festival is ushered in by rural sounds and rural games. "It is thus," say the Puranas, or holy text, "she was

awakened by Brahma, during the night of the gods."

The dawn had yet but faintly silvered the plantain-trees which thatched the Christian's hut, when the distant strains of sylvan music stole on his ear, as he knelt engaged in the exercise of his morning devotions. The sounds approached: he arose, and observed a religious procession moving near his tent towards a pagoda, which lay embosomed in the dark shades of the forest. The band was led by faquirs and pilgrims. The idol was carried by women, underneath a canopy of flowers. A troop of officiating priestesses danced before its triumphal car: the splendour of their ornaments almost concealed their

charms, and they moved with languid grace, to the strains of pastoral instruments, while small golden bells, fastened round their wrists and ancles, played with the motion of their feet, and kept time to the melody of their hymns. They were succeeded by the Guru of Cashmire, reposing on a palanquin, and the Brahmins of the temple followed. The Prophetess led the band of tributary votaries; *her* eyes, with a celestial meekness, threw their soft and dewy beams on the offerings which she carried in a small golden vase; and her cheek seemed rather to reflect the tint of the scarlet berries of the mullaca, which twined her dark hair, than to glow with the blush of a human emotion. The folds of her pure drapery, soft and

fleecy as it was, but faintly defined the perfect forms of her perfect figure, of which an exquisite modesty, a mysterious reserve, were the distinguishing characteristics. Her thought seemed to belong to Heaven, and her glance to the offering she was about to make at its shrine. A train of religious women surrounded her, and the procession was filled up with votaries of every description, and of every class, from the princely Chittery to the humble Soodar, all laden with their various offerings of rice and oil, of fruit and flowers, of precious stones and exquisite odours.

As they proceeded, they reached an altar erected to *Camdeo, the god of mystic love*. At the sight of this

object, every eye turned with devotion on his consecrated Priestess. The procession stopped. The sibyl Priestess stood at the foot of the shrine of her tutelar deity, and the superstitious multitude fell prostrate at the feet of the Prophetess. They invoked her intercession with the god she served : mothers held up their infants to her view ; fathers inquired from her the fate of their absent sons ; and many addressed her on the future events of their lives ; while she, not more deceiving than deceived, became the victim of her own imposition, and stood in the midst of her votarists, in all the imposing charm of holy illusion. Her enthusiasm once kindled, her imagination became disordered : believing herself inspired, she looked the immortality

she fancied, and uttered rhapsodies in accents so impressive and so tender, and with emotions so wild, and yet so touching, that the mind no longer struggled against the imposition of the senses, and the spirit of fanatical zeal confirmed the influence of human loveliness.

Hitherto, curiosity had induced the Missionary to follow the procession; but he now turned back, horror-struck. Too long had the apostle of Christianity been the witness of those impious rites, offered by the idolaters to the idolatress; and the indignation he felt at all he had seen, at all he had heard, produced an irritability of feeling, new to a mind so tranquil, and but little consonant to a character so regulat-

ed, so subdued, so far above even the laudable weakness of human nature. He considered the false Prophetess as the most fatal opponent to his intentions, and he looked to her conversion as the most effectual means to accomplish the success of his enterprise. He shuddered to reflect on the weakness and frailty of man, who is so often led to truth by the allurements which belong to error; and he devoted the remainder of the day to the consideration of those pious plans, by which he hoped, one day, to shade the brow of the Heathen Priestess with the sacred veil of the Christian Nun.

The complexional springs of passion in the character of the Missionary had been regulated and re-

strained by the habits of his temperate and solitary life ; the natural impetuosity and ardour of his feelings had been tranquillized and subdued, by the principles of his pure and spiritual religion ; and though his perceptions were quick and rapid in their exercise, yet he had so accustomed his mind to distrust its first impulse, that, all enthusiast as he was, he was yet less so from the vivacity of a first impression than from the mental operation which succeeded to it. The idea which was coolly admitted into his mind, gradually possessed itself of his imagination, and there gave birth to a series of impressions and emotions, which, in their combined force, finally mastered every thought and act of his life. Thus he became

zealous in any pursuit, not because it had, in the first instance, struck him powerfully, nor that he had suffered himself to be borne away by its immediate impression, but because that, suspicious of himself, he had examined it, in all its points of view, considered it in all its references, and studied it in all its relations, till it exclusively occupied his reveries, received the glow of his powerful fancy, and engaged all the force of his intellectual being. It was thus that he frequently meditated himself into passion, and that the habits of his artificial character produced an effect on his conduct similar to that which the indulgence of his natural impulses would eventually have given birth to.

When the description of the Priestess of Cashmire first met his ear, it made no impression on his mind : when he beheld her receiving the homage of a deity, all lovely as she was, she awakened no other sentiment in his breast than a pious indignation, natural to his religious zeal, at beholding human reason so subdued by human imposition. When her story had been related to him, and her influence described, he then considered her as the powerful rival of his influence, and the most fatal obstacle to the success of the enterprise he had engaged in ; but when the Pundit had awakened the hope of her conversion, and asserted the possibility of her influence becoming the instrument of divine grace to her nation, then the

Indian gradually became the sole and incessant subject of his thoughts; and her idea was so mingled with his religious hopes, so blended with his sacred mission, so intimately connected with all his best, his brightest views and purest feelings, that, even in prayer, she crossed his imagination; and when he sued from Heaven a blessing on his enterprise, the name of the idolatress of Cashmire was included in the orison.

The Guru and his train had left Lahore, on the evening of the festival of the goddess Durga, for his native province; and, a few weeks after his departure, the Missionary commenced his pilgrimage towards Upper India. He was now equal to

his undertaking; for he spoke the pure Hindu with the fluency of an educated native, and read the Sanscrit with ease and even with facility. He had made himself master of the topography of the country—the valley of Cashmire, its villages, its capital, its pagodas, and the temple and Brahminical college, in which the Guru presided; and already furnished with the means of providing for the few contingencies of his pilgrimage, the most necessary luxury of which is afforded by the numerous tanks and springs, whose construction is considered a religious duty, the apostolic Nuncio left Lahore, and commenced his journey towards Cashmire.

The black robe of his order flung over his lighter Indian vestment, his

brow shaded by the monastic cowl, his hand grasping the pastoral crozier, wearing on his breast the sacred crucifix, and nourished only by the fruits and nutritious grains, with which a bounteous nature supplied him. His, resembled the saintly progress of the Apostles of old; a fine image of that pure, tender, and self-denying faith, whose divine doctrines he best illustrated by the example of his own sinless life; but he observed, with an acute feeling of disappointment, that the harvest bore no proportion to the exertions of the labourer. In whatever direction he turned his steps, the zeal of Hindu devotion met his view, while every where the religion of the Hindus gave him the strongest idea of the wild extravagance which su-

perstition is capable of producing, or the acute sufferings which religious fortitude is equal to sustain. Every where he found new reason to observe, how perfectly the human mind could bend its plastic powers to those restraints, which the law of society, the prejudices of country, or the institutes of religion, imposed. He felt, how arbitrary was the law of human opinion; how little resorted to were the principles of human nature; how difficult to eradicate those principles impressed on the character without any operation of the reason, received in the first era of existence, expanding with the years, and associating with all the feelings, the passions, and the habits of life. But these reflections, equally applicable to

human character in the West and in the East, were now first made under the new impressions formed by the observation of novel prejudices in others, not stronger, perhaps, but different from his own; and he whose life had been governed by a dream, was struck by the imbecility of those who submitted their reason to the tyranny of a baseless illusion.

Amidst the tissue of prejudices, however, which disfigure the faith of the Hindus, he sometimes perceived the force of their mild and benevolent natures bearing away the barriers of artificial distinctions; and though it is deemed infamous, and hazards loss of cast, for a follower of Brahma to partake of the same meal with the professor of any

other faith, yet the Missionary found in India the true region of hospitality ; choulteries, or public asylums for travellers, frequently occurred in the course of his route ; while the master of every simple hut was ready to spread the mat beneath the stranger's feet, and to weave the branches of his plantain-tree above the stranger's head ; to present to the parched lip of the wanderer the milk of his cocoa-nut, and to his aching brow the shade of his humble roof. Happy are they who preserve, amidst the wreck of human reason, the dear and precious vestiges of human tenderness !

As the Missionary proceeded towards the north, he was still hailed with the pensive welcome of the

Indian smile. Some few of the simple and patriarchal people, who had heard of Europe, knew him by his complexion for a native of the West; but the greater number believed him to be a wandering Arab, from the lofty dignity of his stature, from the brilliant expression of his countenance; and then they would ask him to speak of the Genii of his religion, or to relate to them those splendid tales for which his nation is so celebrated: but when he sought to undeceive them, when he declared that he came, not to amuse by fiction, but to enlighten by truth; when he openly avowed to them the nature and object of his sacred mission, they fled him in fear, or heard him with incredulity.

It was in vain that he invoked from Heaven some part of that miraculous power granted to those who had preceded him ; that he might be able, with Francis Xavier, to cure the sick by a touch, or raise the dead by a look *. He could, indeed, watch with the saint, pray with the saint, and suffer with the saint, perhaps even far beyond those who had succeeded him : he could overwhelm by his eloquence, command by his dignity, attach by his address, and awe by his example ;

* “ The process of the saint’s canonization,” says the biographer of Xavier, “ makes mention of four dead persons, to whom God restored life at this time by the ministry of his servant.”

but he could not subvert a single law of nature, nor, by any miraculous power, change the immutable decree of the First Will :—for, to him it was still denied to convert those from error, through the medium of astonishment, whom he could not subdue by the influence of truth.

In less than a fortnight from his departure from Lahore, he reached the upper region, those dreadful and desolate plains, which stretch towards the base of the great and black rock of Bimbhar. Alone in the dreary waste, the Missionary felt all the value of an enterprise, marked by perils so terrific ; but he felt it

unsubdued. The dry and hot air* parched his lip; his feet trod in the channel of a torrent, dried up, whose bed seemed strewed with burning lava; a fever preyed upon the springs of being, and a parching thirst consumed his vitals; death, in the most dreadful form, met his view, but found him unappalled; and the tide of life was almost exhausted in his veins, when, worn out and feeble, he reached the foot of the rock of the pass of Bimbhar, denominated *The Mouth of the Vale*

* “Cet excès de chaleur vient de la situation de ces hautes montagnes qui se trouvent au nord de la route, arrêtent les vents frais, réfléchissent les rayons du soleil sur les voyageurs, et laissent dans la campagne un ardeur brulante.”—BERNIER.

of Cashmire. High, sharp, and rude, it held a menacing aspect. Weak and enfeebled, the Missionary with difficulty ascended its savage acclivities. Nature seemed almost to have made her last effort when he reached its summit: his strength was wholly exhausted. Supported by his crosier, he paused, and cast one look behind him. He beheld the terrific wastes he had passed, and shuddered: he turned round, and flung his glance on the scene which opened at his feet; and the heaven which receives the soul of the blessed, met his view*.

* “ Il (Bernier) n'eut plutôt monté ce qu'il nomme l'affreuse muraille du monde (parce-qu'il regard Cashmire un paradis terrestre), c'est à dire une haute-montagne noir et pelée,

Confined within the majestic girdle of the Indian Caucasus, Cashmire, the birth-place of Brahma, the scene of his avatars, came at once under his observation. The brilliant scene, the balmy atmosphere, renovated his spirits and his frame. He rapidly descended the rock, now no longer bleak, no longer rude, but embossed with odoriferous plants, and shaded by lofty shrubs. His vital powers, his mental faculties, seemed to dilate to the influence of the pure and subtil air, which circulated with

qu'en descendant sur l'autre face il sentoit un air plus frais et plus temperé : mais rien ne se sur-
prise tant, dans ces montagnes, que de se trou-
vir, tout d'un coup, transporté des Indes en
Europe."—*Histoire Generale des Voyages*,
livre ii. p. 301.

a genial softness through his frame, and gave to his whole being a sense of vague but pure felicity, which made even life itself enjoyment. The cusa-grass, which shrunk elastically beneath his steps, emitted a delicious odour; the golden fruit of the assocca-tree offered a luscious refreshment to his parched lip, and countless streams of liquid silver meeting, in natural basins, under the shade of the seringata, whose beauty has given it a place in the lunar constellations, offered to his weary frame the most necessary luxury that he could now enjoy.

It was evening when he reached the vale of Cashmire*. Purple mists

* According to Forster, the utmost extent of this delicious vale from S. E. to N. W. is

hung upon the lustre of its enchanting scenes, and gave them, in fairy forms, to the stranger's eye. The fluttering plumage of the peacocks and lories fanned the air, as they sought repose among the luxuriant foliage of the trees : the silence of the delicious hour knew no interruption, but from the soothing murmurs of innumerable cascades. All breathed a tranquil but luxurious enjoyment ; all invited to a repose which resembled a waking dream. The Missionary had no power to resist the soft and new emotions which possessed themselves of his whole being ; it seemed as if sensa-

scarcely 90 miles ; other travellers assert it to be but 40 miles from east to west, and 25 from north to south.

tion had survived all power of perception ; and, throwing himself on the odorous moss, which was shaded by the magnificent branches of the pamelo, the oak of the East, he slept.



CHAPTER VI.

THE morning dawn, as it silvered the snows on the summits of the vast chain of the Indian Caucasus, and shed its light along the lower declivities of the hills of Cashmire, which swell at their base, awakened the Christian wanderer from a dream, pure and bright as a prophet's vision. In sleep he had believed himself to be in the abodes of the just, and he awaked in the regions of the blessed. Refreshed, invigorated, he arose, and offered the incense of the heart to Him, of whose power and beneficence his

soul now received such new and splendid images.

Taking the broad stream of the Behat as his guide, he proceeded along its winding shores, towards the district of Sirinagar. Surrounded by those mighty mountains whose summits appear tranquil and luminous, above the regions of clouds which float on their brow, whose grotesque forms are brightened by innumerable rills, and dashed by foaming torrents, the valley of Cashmire presented to the wandering eye scenes of picturesque and glowing beauty, whose character varied with each succeeding hour. Sometimes the mango-groves, with their golden oblong fruit and gigantic leaves, were mingled with plant-

ations of mulberry, which, rising in luxuriant foliage, give sustenance to myriads of industrious insects, spinning from tree to tree their golden threads, which float like fairy banners, or brilliant particles of light, upon the fragrant gale; while, as emulous of their exertions, the Indian weaver seated at his loom beneath the shade of his plantain-tree, plied his slender fingers amidst the almost impalpable threads of his transparent web. Sometimes the ruins of a pagoda appeared through the boles of a distant forest, or the picturesque view of a Hindu village, formed of the slender bamboo, thatched with the brilliant leaves of the water-melon, appeared amidst the surrounding cotton-grounds, glowing with that

tinted lustre of colouring, falsely deemed exclusively peculiar to the scenery of tropical climes ; while herdsmen tending their snowy flocks on the brow of the surrounding hill, or youthful women carrying on their veiled heads vases of consecrated waters from the holy springs of the valley, recalled to the mind of the Missionary the venerable and touching simplicity of the patriarchal age.

Wherever the Christian wanderer appeared, he was beheld with curiosity and admiration. The dignity of his form commanded respect, and the meekness of his manner inspired confidence. They said, “ It is a sanaissee, or pilgrim, of some distant nation, performing tupesya in

a strange land ;” and, with the same benevolent kindness with which they relieved the pilgrims of their own religion, did they administer to his comforts : but when, availing himself of the interest he excited, he endeavoured to unfold to them the nature and object of a mission, to accomplish which he had come from distant regions, they turned coldly from him, saying, “ God has appointed to each tribe its own faith, and to each sect its own religion : let each obey the appointment of God, and live in peace with his neighbour.”

This decided disappointment of all his holy views, grieved, without discouraging him. The perseverance of a genius not to be subdued, was

the grand feature of his character ; and a religious hope still hurried him towards that point, which was the object of his pious ambition. He deemed the conversion of the Prophetess a task reserved for him alone : the conversion of her nation a miracle which *she* only could accomplish.

He now proceeded to Sirinagar, and, within a few leagues of the capital*, he was struck by the appearance of a cave, in which he resolved to fix his abode. It was evening when the Missionary reach-

* So called by the Hindus and by the ancient annals of India ; but Bernier and Forster denominate the capital and its district by the same name as the kingdom or province.

ed the base of a lofty mountain, which seemed a monument of the first day of creation. It was a solemn and sequestered spot, where an eternal spring seemed to reign, and which looked like the cradle of infant Nature, where she first awoke, in all her primeval bloom of beauty. It was a glen, skreened by a mighty mass of rocks, over whose bold fantastic forms and variegated hues dashed the silvery foam of the mountain torrent, flinging its dewy sprays around, till, breaking into fairy rills, it stole into a branch of the Behat, whose overflowing, at some distant period, had worn its way into the heart of the rock, and produced a small sparry cavern which, from the splendour of the stalactites that

hung like glittering icicles from its shining roof, had been named by the people of the country, *the grotto of congelations*. Wild and sequestered as was this romantic place, it yet, by its vicinity to the huts of some goalas, or Indian shepherds, left not its inhabitant wholly destitute of such assistance as even his simple and frugal life might still require; while, on every side, the luscious milk of the cocoa-nut, the fruit of the bread-tree, the nutritious grains of the wild rice plant, the luxurious produce of innumerable fruit-trees, and the pure bath of the mountain spring, were luxuries, supplied by Nature, in these, her loveliest and favourite regions.

The Missionary employed himself, during the evening, in erecting at the most remote extremity of the grotto, a rude altar, on which he placed the golden crucifix he usually carried suspended from his girdle; and, having formed what might be even deemed a luxurious couch of mosses and dried leaves, a night of calm repose passed swiftly away. The dawn, as it shone through the crevices of his asylum grotto, was reflected by the golden crucifix suspended over his altar. The heart of the Christian throbbed with an holy rapture, as he observed the ray of consecrated light. He arose, and prostrated himself before the first shrine ever raised to his Redeemer, in the most distant and most idolatrous of the provinces of Hindoo-

stan : he then took his crosier, and issued forth, looking like the tutelar spirit of the magnificent region he was going to explore. A goala who was descending the rocks with his dogs, gave him as he passed a look of homage, such as the mind instinctively sends to the eye when its glance rests upon a being whom Providence seemed to have formed in all the beneficence and prodigality of its creative power.

The Missionary, taking the path towards Sirinagar, emerged from the deep shade of his glen, into a scene of picturesque beauty, which burst, in all the radiance of the rising day, upon his view, terminated by the cultivated hills of Sirinagar, and the snowy mountains of Thibet,

rising like a magnificent amphitheatre to the east; but a grove of mangoostin-trees, still wrapt in the soft mists of dawn, became an object peculiarly attractive, in proportion to the retiring mystery of its gloomy shade. The Missionary struck off from the high road, to pierce into its almost impenetrable recesses. He proceeded through a path, which, from the long cusa-grass netted over it, and the entangled creepers of the parasite plants, seemed to have been rarely, if ever, explored. The trees, thick and umbrageous, were wedded, in their towering branches, above his head, and knitted, in their spreading roots, beneath his feet. The sound of a cascade became his sole guide through the leafy labyrinth.

He at last reached the pile of rocks whence the torrent flowed, pouring its tributary flood into a broad river, formed of the confluence of the Behat and a branch of the Indus: the spot, therefore, was sacred*; and a shrine, erected on the banks of the river, opposite to the rising sun, already reflected the first ray of the effulgent orb, as it rose in all its majesty from behind the snowy points of the mountains of Thibet. Before the altar, and near the consecrated shrine, appeared a human form, if human it might be called, which stood so bright and so ethereal in its look, that it seemed but a transient incorporation of the

* The confluence of streams is sacred to the followers of Brahma.

brilliant mists of morning; so light and so aspiring in its attitude, that it appeared already ascending from the earth it scarcely touched, to mingle with its kindred air. The resplendent locks of the seeming sprite were enwreathed with beams, and sparkled with the waters of the holy stream, whence it appeared recently to have emerged. A drapery of snow shone round a form perfect in grace and symmetry. One arm, decorated with a rosary, was pointed to the rising sun; the other, at intervals, was thrice applied to the brow, and the following incantation from the Brahminical scriptures was then lowly and solemnly pronounced: "O pure waters! since you afford delight, grant me a rapturous view of heaven; and as he

who plunges into thy wave is freed from all impurity, so may my soul live, free from all pollution." Thrice again bowing to the sun, the suppliant thus continued: "On that effulgent power, which is Brahma, do I meditate: governed by that mysterious light which exists internally within my breast, externally in the orb of the sun, being one and the same with that effulgent power, since I myself am an irradiated manifestation of the supreme Brahma*."

This being of spiritual mystery seemed then given up to a silent and

* "L'Eternel, absorbé dans la contemplation de son essence, resolut dans la plénitude des tems de former des êtres participants de son essence et de sa beatitude."—SHASTAR, traduit en François.

religious rapture; and the Missionary, by a slight movement, changing his position, beheld the rapt countenance of the votarist, who had so sublimely assimilated herself to the orb she worshipped, and the God she served. It was Luxima! At the rustling of his robe among the trees, she started, turned round; and her eyes fell upon his figure, while her own was still fixed in the graceful attitude of devotion. Silently gazing, in wonder, upon each other, they stood finely opposed, the noblest specimens of the human species, as it appears in the most opposite regions of the earth; she; like the East, lovely and luxuriant; he, like the West, lofty and commanding: the one, radiant in

all the lustre, attractive in all the softness which distinguishes her native regions; the other, towering in all the energy, imposing in all the vigour, which marks his ruder latitudes: she, looking like a creature formed to feel and to submit; he, like a being created to resist and to command: while both appeared as the ministers and representatives of the two most powerful religions of the earth; the one no less enthusiastic in her brilliant errors, than the other confident in his immutable truth.

The Christian Saint and Heathen Priestess remained for some time motionless, in look as in attitude; till Luxima, from a sudden impulse, withdrawing her eyes, the sensation

of amazement depicted in her countenance, was rapidly succeeded by a bashful and timid emotion, which rose her cheek with crimson hues, and threw round her an air of shrinking modesty, which softened the inspired dignity of the offspring of Brahma. But when the Priestess disappeared, the woman stood too much confessed; and a feminine reserve, a lovely timidity, so characteristic of her sex, overwhelmed the Missionary with confusion: he remained, leaning on his crosier, his eyes cast down upon his beads, his lips motionless.

Luxima, who resembled as she stood, the flower which contracts and folds upon itself, even to the influence of the evening air, was

the first to interrupt this unexpected and mysterious interview ; with a sudden movement she glided by the stranger, but with an air of chill reserve, of majestic distance, as though she feared the unhallowed vestment of infidelity should pollute the consecrated garb of vestal sanctity. He addressed her not, nor by a movement attempted to oppose her intention. He saw her proceed up an avenue of asoca-trees, which received the glittering form of the Priestess into their impervious shade. As she disappeared amidst the deepening gloom, she seemed, to the eye of her sole spectator, like the ray which darts its sunny lustre through the dark vapours gathered, by evening, on the brow

of night. Still was his glance directed to the path she had taken; still did the brilliant vision float on his imagination, till the sun, as it deepened the shadows of the trees around him, told how long a reverie, so new and singular in its object, had stolen him from himself. He started, and moved unconsciously towards the bank of the stream, where traces of her idolatrous rites were still visible. Some unctuous clay, mingled with the ottar of the rose, strewed its perfume on the earth; and near it lay a wreath of the bu-champaca, the flower of the dawn, whose vestal buds blow with the sun's first ray, and fade and die beneath his meridian beam, leaving only their odour to survive their transient blooms.

This wreath, so emblematic of the fragile loveliness of her who wore it, lay glistening in the sun. The Missionary took it up. A prejudice, or a pious delicacy, urged him to let it drop: he knew that it had made a part of an idolatrous ceremony; that it had been twined by idolatrous hands; but he could not forget, that those hands had looked so lovely and so pure, that they almost consecrated the act they had been engaged in: he wished also to believe, that those hands would yet adjust the monastic veil upon the Christian vestal's brow; he blamed, therefore, a fastidiousness, which almost resembled bigotry, and again took up the wreath. It breathed of the musky odours which had effused

themselves from the tresses of the Indian as she passed him; and thus awakened to the recollection of their interview, he wandered back to his grotto, forgetful of his intention to visit Sirinagur, and occupied only in reflecting on the accident which had thus rendered him a resident in the neighbourhood of the Priestess of Cashmire.



CHAPTER VII.

THE day was bright and ardent, the grotto was cool and shady; and the Missionary felt no inclination to leave a retreat, so adapted to the season and his tone of mind. He engaged in the perusal of the Scriptures, an abridged translation of which he had made into the Hindu dialect, and in devotional exercises and pious meditations: yet, for the first time, he found his thoughts not always obedient to his will; but he perceived that they had not changed their character, but their object; and that, in reverting to the

the interview of the morning, they still took into the scale of their reflection, the subject of his mission.

When he had finished the holy offices of the evening, he walked forth to enjoy its coolness and its beauty. He bent his steps involuntarily towards the altar erected at the confluence of the streams. The whole scene had changed its aspect with the sun's course: it was still and gloomy, and formed a strong relief to the luxuriance of the avenue of asoca-trees, on whose summit the western sky poured its flood of crimson light. He wandered through its illuminated shades, till he suddenly found himself in a little valley, almost surrounded by hills, and opening,

by a rocky defile, towards the mountains of Sirinagur, which formed a termination to the vista. In the centre of the valley, a stream, dividing into two branches, nearly surrounded a sloping mound, which swelled from their banks. The mound was covered with flowering shrubs, through whose entwining branches the shafts of a Verandah were partially seen, while the Pavillion to which it belonged, was wholly concealed. The eye of the Missionary was fascinated by the romantic beauty of this fairy scene, softened in all its lovely features by the declining light, which was throwing its last red beams upon the face of the waters. All breathed the mystery of a consecrated spot, and every

tree seemed sacred to religious rites. The bilva, the shrub of the goddess Durga*; the high flowering murva, whose nectarous pores emit a scented beverage, and whose elastic fibres form the sacrificial threads of the Brahmins; the bacula, the lovely tree of the Indian Eden; and the lofty cadamba, which, dedicated to the third incarnation, is at once the most elegant and holy of Indian trees; all spoke, that the ground whereon he trod was consecrated; all gave a secret intimation to his heart, that his eyes then dwelt upon the secluded retreat of the vestal Priestess of Cashmire.

* The Goddess of Nature in the Indian mythology.

At the moment that he was struck by the conviction, a light and rustling noise seemed to proceed from the summit of the mound. He drew back, and casting up his eyes, perceived Luxima descending amidst the trees. She came darting lightly forward, like an evening iris; no less brilliant in hue, no less rapid in descent. She passed without observing the Missionary, and her dark and flowing tresses left an odour on the air, which penetrated his senses. He had not the power to follow, nor to address her: he crossed himself, and prayed. He, who in the temple of the idol had preached against idolatry to a superstitious multitude, bold and intrepid as a self-devoted martyr, now, in a lovely solitude, where all was cal-

culated to sooth the feelings of his mind, and to harmonize with the tender mildness of his mission; trembled to address a young, a solitary, and timid woman. It seemed as if Heaven had withdrawn its favour; as if the spirit of his zeal had passed away. While he hesitated, Luxima had approached the stream, and the light of the setting sun fell warmly round her. Thrice she bowed to the earth the brow irradiated with his beams, and then raising her hands to the west, while all the enthusiasm of a false, but ardent devotion, sparkled in her upturned eye, and diffused itself over her seraphic countenance, she repeated the vesper worship of her religion.

It was then that a zeal no less enthusiastic, a devotion no less fervid, animated the Christian Priest. He darted forward, and seized an arm thus raised in impious homage. He discarded the usual mildness of his evangelic feelings; with vehemence he exclaimed, "Mistaken being! know you what you do? that profanely you offer to the Created, that which belongs to the Creator only!"

The Indian, silent from amazement, stood trembling in his grasp; but she gazed for a moment on the Missionary, and, to an evident emotion of apprehension and astonishment, succeeded feelings still more profound. A resentful blush crimsoned her cheek, and her dark brows

knit angrily above the languid orbs they shaded. The touch of the stranger was sacrilege. He had seized a hand, which the royal cast of her country would have trembled to have approached : he had equally shocked the national prejudice and natural delicacy of the woman, and violated the sacred character and holy office of the Priestess ; she withdrew, therefore, from his clasp, shuddering and indignant, and looking imperiously on him, exclaimed, “ Depart hence :—that, by an instant ablution in these consecrated waters, I may efface the pollution of thy touch ; leave me, that I may expiate a crime, for which I must else innocently suffer.”

The Missionary, with an air of dignified meekness, letting fall his arms, and casting down his eyes to the earth, replied: "Daughter, in approaching thee, I obey a will higher than thy command; I obey a Power, which bids me tell thee, that the prejudice to which thy mind submits, is false alike to happiness and to reason; and that a religion which creates distinction between the species, cannot be the religion of truth; for He who alike made thee and me, knows no distinction: He who died to redeem my sins, died also for thy salvation. Children of different regions, we are yet children of the same Parent, created by the same Hand, and inheritors of the same immortality."

He ceased. Luxima gazed timidly on him, and expressions strongly marked, and of a varying character, diffused themselves over her countenance. At last she exclaimed, "Stranger, thou sayest we are of the same *cast*. Art thou, then, an irradiation of the Deity, and, like me, wilt thou finally be absorbed in his divine effulgence? Ah, no! thou wouldst deceive me, and cannot. Thou art *he*, the daring Infidel, who, in the temple at Lahore, denied all faith in the triple God, the holy Treemoortee; Brahma, Vishna, and Shiven: thou art he, who boldly dared to imitate the sixth avatar, in which Brahma, as a priest, did come to destroy the religions of nations, and to diffuse his own: yes, thou art he, who

would seem a god among us, and, by seducing our minds from the true faith, deprive us of our *cast* on earth, and plunge us, hereafter, into the dark Nerekah, the abode of evil spirits. I know thee well, and thy power is great and dreadful ; for in the midst of the shrines of the Gods I worship, thy image only fixed my eye ; and when Brahma spoke by the lips of his Guru, thy voice only left its accents on my ear. Ere thou didst speak, I took thee for the tenth avatar, which is yet to come ; and when I listened to thee, I deemed thee one of the Genii of the Arab's faith, whose words are false though sweet. But they say thou art a Christian, and a sorcerer ; and punishment, with a *black aspect* and a *red eye*, waits on the souls of

them who listen to, and who believe thee."

With these words, rapidly pronounced, blushing at her own temerity, in thus addressing a stranger of another sex, and involved in the confusion of her own new and powerful feelings, she would have glided away; but the Missionary following, caught the drapery of her robe, and said, with impressive dignity, "I command thee, in the name of Him who sent me, to stay and hear."

Luxima turned round. Her cheek was pale, she trembled, and raised her hands in the attitude of supplication. Shrinking back upon herself, fear, mingled with a sense of the profanation she endured, seemed

to be the leading emotion of her soul. The Missionary, struck by the pleading softness of her air, and apprehensive of forfeiting all chance of another interview, by a perseverance in now detaining her, drew back a few paces, and crossing his hands on his bosom, and casting his eyes to earth, he sighed, and said, "Go! thou art free; but take with thee the prayers and blessings of him, who, to procure thy eternal happiness, would joy to sacrifice his mortal life." He spoke with enthusiasm and feeling:—Luxima heard him in amazement and emotion. Free to go, she yet lingered for a moment; then raising her eyes to heaven, as if she invoked the protection of some tutelary deity, she turned abruptly away, and

gliding up the mount, disappeared amidst the ombrage of its trees.

The Missionary remained motionless. The result of this interview convinced him, that in the same light as the infidel appeared to him, in such had he appeared to her; alike beyond the pale of salvation, alike dark in error. Her prejudices, indeed, extended even beyond the abstract sentiment; for his words were not only deemed sacrilegious, but his very presence was considered as pollution: and her opinions seemed so animated by her enthusiasm, her religious faith so blended with her human ambition, that he believed he might well deem the conversion of her nation possible, could hers be once effected. But to those obstacles

were opposed the success, which had even already crowned his progressive efforts: either by a fortunate chance, or by a divine providence, he had established himself near her residence; he was acquainted with the places of her morning and evening worship; he had addressed her, and she had replied to him. She had, indeed, confessed she feared his presence, and she had endeavoured to fly him; but had she not also avowed the deep impressions he had made on her mind? that she had mistaken him for an incarnation of her worshipped god; and, in the consecrated temple of her faith, where she stood, not more adoring than adored, that *his* image only rested on her imagination, *his* accents only dwelt upon her ear?

The Missionary moved rapidly away, as this conviction came home to his heart. He believed he felt it all, as a religious should only feel, through the medium of his mission, and not as a man through the agency of his feelings; and he returned thanks to Heaven, that the grace of conversion was already working in the pure, but erring, soul of the innocent infidel, slowly indeed, and under the influence of the senses; but the ear which had been charmed, the eye which had been fixed, were organs of intellect, the powerful sources of mind itself.

Another day rose on the cave of the apostolic Nuncio; but he extended not his wanderings beyond the huts of the neighbouring Goalas: when he approached them, he was

hailed with smiles; but when he attempted to preach to them, they listened to him with indifference, or heard with incredulity. He sighed, and believing his hour was not yet come, looked forward, with religious patience, to the moment, when he should present, to the worshippers of Brahma, a Neophyte, whose conversion would be the sole miracle which graced his mission: but what miracle could better evince the divinity of the doctrine he advanced, than that a Priestess of Brahma, a Prophetess, a Brachmachira, should believe in, and receive it? He beheld, therefore, from the summit of his asylum, towns and villages, the palaces of Rajahs, and the cottages of the Ryots; but he approached them not. The

charms of a solitude, so lovely and so profound, grew with an increasing and hourly influence on his heart and imagination. Pure light and pure air, the softest sounds and sweetest odours, skies for ever sunny, and shades for ever cool, the song of birds and murmur of cascades, all, in a residence so enchanting, rendered life itself an innocent enjoyment. The goalas called him "The Hermit of the Grotto of Congelations;" and believing him to be an harmless fanatic, and a holy man of some unknown faith, they respected his solitude, and never intruded on it, but to furnish him with the simple necessaries his simple life required *.

* " Il ne faut à ces nations que des nourritures rafraichissantes, et mère la nature leur a

For some time he forbore approaching the consecrated grove of the Priestess : he wished to awaken confidence, and feared to banish it by importunity. On the evening of the third day, he directed his steps towards the pavilion of Luxima, always concealing himself amidst the trees, lest he should be observed by any of the few attendants who resided with her. At a little distance from the confluence of the streams, his ear was struck by a moan of suffering. He flew to the spot whence it proceeded, and beheld a young fawn in the fangs of a wolf;

prodigue des forêts de citronniers, d'oranges, de figuiers, de palmiers, de cocotiers, et des campagnes couvertes de riz."—*Essai sur les Mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations.* VOLTAIRE.

an animal rarely seen in the innoxious shades of Cashmire, but which is sometimes driven, by hunger, from the mountain wilds of Thibet into the valley. The animal, fierce in want, now suddenly dropt his bleeding prey, and turned on the man. The bright glare of his distended eyes, the discovery of his fang-teeth, his inclined head, the sure presages of destruction, all spoke the attack he meditated. The Missionary, firm and motionless, met his advance with the spear of his crosier; and though the wolf rushed upon its point, the slight wound it inflicted only served to whet his rage. He gained upon his opponent. The Missionary threw away the crosier. He had no alternative: he rushed upon the animal; he struggled with its strength: the contest was un-

equal; but it was but of a moment's duration: the animal lay strangled at his feet, and the Missionary returned his acknowledgments to that Power, which had thus nerved his arm, and preserved his life. He then turned to the fawn. It was but slightly wounded; and as it lay trembling on the grass, its preserver could not but admire its singular beauty. Its form was perfect, its velvet coat was smooth and polished, and its delicate neck was encircled by a silver collar, clasped with the mountain gem of Cashmire. Some Shanscrit characters were engraved on this collar, but the Missionary paused not to peruse them. The suppliant looks of the gentle and familiar fawn excited his pity: it seemed no stranger to

human attentions, and caressed the hand of the Missionary, when he took it in his arms to bear it to his cave; for it was unable to move, and his benevolent nature would not permit him to leave it to perish. It was also evident, that it was the favourite of some person of distinction, to whom he would take pleasure in restoring it; for though he had conquered all human affections in himself, and had lived alone for Heaven, neither loving nor beloved on earth, yet sometimes he remotely guessed at the happiness such a feeling might bestow on others less anxious for perfection; and a vague wish would sometimes escape his heart, that *he* too might love: but when that wish grew with indulgence, and extended itself to a higher object; when the possible existence of

a dearer, warmer, feeling, filled his enthusiast soul, and vibrated through all his sensible being, then the blood flowed like a burning torrent in his veins, his heart quickened in its throb to a feverish pulsation—he trembled, he shuddered, he prayed, and was resigned.

When he had reached the grotto, he placed his helpless burden on some moss. He bathed its wound, and applying to it some sanative herbs, was about to bind it with the long fibres of the cusa-grass, when the light which flowed in upon his task was suddenly obscured. He was on his knees at the moment: he turned round his head, and perceived that the shadow fell from a form which hovered at the entrance

of his grotto. The form was Luxima's: it was the Priestess of Brahma who presented herself at the entrance of the Christian's cave: it was the zealous Brachmachira, who stood within a few steps of the Christian's altar. The Missionary remained in the motionless attitude of surprise. He could not be deceived: it was no vision of ethereal mildness, such as descends upon the abodes of holy men; for, all pale, and spiritual, and heaven-born as it looked, it was still all woman: it was still the Idolatress. With eyes of languid softness, with looks so wild, so timid in their glance, as if she trembled at the shade her figure pictured on the sunny earth; before the Monk had power to rise, she advanced into the centre of the grotto, and kneeling opposite to him,

and beside the fawn, she said, "Al-mora, my dear and faithful animal; thou whom I have fostered, as thy mother would have fostered thee; thou dost, then, still live! and the innocent spirit thy lovely form embodies, has not yet fled to some less pure receptacle." At the sound of her caressing voice, the favourite raised her languid eyes, and fawned upon her hands. "It lives!" she said joyfully; and turning her look upon the Missionary, added, in a softer voice, "And thou hast saved its life?"

As she spoke, her eyes fell in bashful disorder, beneath the fixed look of the Missionary; and again gently raising their dewy light, threw around the cavern, a glance

of wonder and curiosity. The sun was setting radiantly opposite to its entrance, and the spars of its vaulted roof shone with the hue and lustre of vivid rubies: pure rays of refracted light fell from the golden crucifix on the surface of the marble altar; and the figure of the Monk, habited only in a white jama, finely harmonized with the scene, and gave to the grotto that air of enchantment, which the Indian fancy delights to dwell on. The mind of Luxima seemed rapt in the wondrous imagery by which she was surrounded. She again turned her eyes on the Monk, and suddenly starting from her position, the head of the fawn fell from her bosom. "Thou art wounded!" she exclaimed, with a voice of pity and of

terror. The Monk perceived that the breast of his jama was stained with blood. "Thou wilt bleed to death!" she continued, trembling, and approaching him: "thou, who, unlike other infidels, art so tender towards a suffering animal, art thou to suffer unassisted?"

"My religion teaches me to assist and to relieve all who live and suffer," said the Missionary; "but here, who is there to assist me?"—Luxima changed colour; she flew out of the grotto, and in a moment returned. "Here," she said eagerly, "here is a lotos-leaf filled with water; bathe thy wound: and here is an herb, sovereign in fresh wounds; apply it to thy bosom: and to-morrow an Arab physician from Sirinagur

shall attend thee.”—“The wound lies not in my bosom,” replied the Monk : “it is my right arm which has been torn by the fangs of the wolf, and I cannot assist myself; yet I thank thee for thy charitable attentions.”

Luxima stood suspenseful and agitated. Natural benevolence, confirmed prejudice, the impulse of pity, and the restraint of religion, all were seen to struggle in the expression of a countenance, which faithfully indicated every movement of the soul. At last nature was victorious, and raising her eyes and hands to heaven, she exclaimed, “Praise be to Vishnu ! who still protects those who are pure in heart, even though their hands be pol-

luted!" Then gently, timidly, approaching the Missionary, she knelt beside him, and raising the sleeve of his jama, she bathed the wound, which was slight, applied to it the sanative herbs, and, tearing off part of her veil, bound his arm with the consecrated fragment. Thus engaged, the colour frequently visited and retired from her cheek. When her hand met the Missionary's, she shuddered and shrank from the touch; and when his eye dwelt on hers, she suddenly averted their glance. They fell at last upon her own faded wreath of the buchamhaca, which was suspended from a point of the rock: she blushed, and cast them down on the rosary of the Christian Hermit, which, at that moment, encircled her own arm.

She perceived that his eyes also rested on them. “ I found them,” she said, replying to his look ; “ for having missed a fawn, who had followed me to the stream of evening worship, I implored the assistance of Moodaivee, the Goddess of Misfortune, and she conducted me to a spot, where I perceived the shining hairs of my favourite, lying scattered around the body of a wolf, who lay, grim and terrific, even in death. I said, ‘ Who is he, powerful as the flaming column, in which ‘ Shiven did manifest his strength— ‘ who is he, bold and terrible, who ‘ thus destroys the destroyer?’ Thy beads told the tale; and the red drops which fell from the wound of the fawn, tracked the path to this cave of wonders, where I have

found thee, kind infidel, acting as an Hindu would have acted; who shudders as he moves, lest, beneath his incautious steps, some viewless insect bleeds. Receive, then, into thy care, this wounded animal; and when it can be removed, lead it, at sunrise, to the confluence of the streams; there I will receive it."

As she spoke, she advanced to the entrance of the cave, and performing the salaam, the graceful salutation of the East, disappeared. Had a celestial visitant irradiated with its brightness the gloom of his cavern, the Missionary would not have been more overwhelmed by emotions of surprise and admiration; but, in recovering from his confusion, he recollected, with a strong

feeling of self-reproach, that he had suffered her to depart, without availing himself of so singular an opportunity of increasing her confidence, and extending their intercourse. He arose—and resuming his monkish robe, followed her with a rapid step. He perceived her, like a vapour which a sunbeam lights, floating amidst the dark shadows of the surrounding trees. The echo of his footsteps caught her ear : she turned round, and the flush of quick surprise mantled even to her brow ; yet a smile of bashful pleasure played round her lips. The Missionary turned away his eyes, and secretly wished she might not thus smile again ; for the pearl, whose snowy lustre the chunam had not yet dimmed, marked by contrast the

ruby brightness of those lips, which, when they smiled, lost all their usual character of seraph meekness, and chased from the playful countenance of the woman, the dignified tranquillity which sat upon the holy look of the Priestess.

The Missionary was now beside her. "The dew of evening," he said, "falls heavy, the sun is about to withdraw its last beam from the horizon, and the cause which drove a ferocious animal into these harmless shades may still exist, and send another from the heights of Thibet; therefore, daughter, have I followed thee!" The Indian looked not insensible, nor yet displeased by his attention; but when he called her *daughter*, she raised her eyes in

wonder to the form of him, who thus assumed the sacred rights of paternity : but she read not there his claim, and repeated in a low voice — “ *Daughter!* ” — “ Yes,” he replied, as a vague sense of pleasure thrilled through his heart, when she repeated the word ; “ yes, I would look upon thee as a daughter, I would be unto thee as a father, I would guide the wanderings of thy mind, as now I guide thy steps, and I would protect thee from evil and from error, as I now protect thee from danger and from accident.”

The countenance of Luxima softened as he spoke. He now addressed himself, not to her prejudices, which were unvanquishable, but to her feelings, which were susceptible: he addressed her, not as the priest of a

religion she feared, but as a man, whom it was impossible to listen to, or to behold, without interest; and the Missionary, observing the means most likely to fascinate her attention and to win her confidence, now dropt the language of his mission, and spoke to her with an eloquence, never before exerted but in the cause of religion. He spoke to her of the lovely wonders of her native region; of the impression which the venerable figure of her grand-sire had made on his mind, in the temple of Lahore; and of her own story, which, he confessed, had deeply interested him: he spoke to her of the loss of affectionate parents, of the untimely fate of a youthful bridegroom, and of the nature of the austere life she herself led; of the tender ties she had relinquished, of the

precious feelings she had sacrificed. In adverting thus to her life, he was governed by an acute consciousness of all the privations of his own ; he spoke of the subjection of the passions, like one constituted to know their tyranny, and capable of opposing it ; and he applauded the fortitude of virtue, like one who estimated the difficulty of resistance by the force of the external temptation and the internal impulse : he spoke a language not usually his own—the *language of sentiment* : but if it wanted something of the force, it wanted nothing of the pathos which distinguished the eloquence of his religion.

Luxima heard him with emotion. Her heart was eloquent, but the nature of her religion, and feminine

reserve, alike sealed her lips. She replied to his observation by looks, and to his questions by monosyllables. He only understood, from her timid and brief answers, that her grandsire was then residing at his college at Sirinagur, and that she lived in religious retirement, in her pavilion, with only two female attendants, wholly devoted to the discipline and exercises of her profession. But though her words were few, reserved, and guarded; yet the warm blush of sudden emotion, the playful smile of unrepressed pleasure, the low sigh of involuntary sadness, and all those simple and obvious expressions of strong and tender feelings, which, in an advanced state of society, are obscured by ceremony, or concealed by affectation, betrayed, to

the Monk, a character, in which tenderness and enthusiasm, and genius and sensibility, mingled their attributes.

When she had reached the base of the mound, the Missionary sought not to proceed. "Daughter," he said, "thou art now within the safe asylum of thy home. Peace be unto thee! and may He, who gave us equally hearts to feel his goodness, guard and protect thee!" As he spoke, he raised his illumined eyes to heaven, and clasped his hands in the suppliant attitude of prayer. The dovelike eyes and innocent hands of the Indian were raised in the same direction; for, gazing on the glories of the firmament, a feeling of rapturous devotion, awakened and exalted by the

enthusiasm of the Missionary, filled her soul.

In this sacred communion, the Christian Saint and Heathen Priestess felt in common and together; and their eyes were only withdrawn from heaven, to become fixed on each other. The beams of both were humid, and both secretly felt the sympathy by which they were united. Luxima withdrew in silence; and the Missionary, as he caught the last glimpse of her form, sighed, and said, "How worthy she is to be saved! how obviously does a dawning grace shed its pure light over the dark prejudices of her wandering mind!" Then he recalled her looks, her blushes, her words: all alike breathed of a

soul, formed for the highest purposes of devotion; a heart endowed with the most exquisite feelings of nature: and, in meditating on the character of his future proselyte, he remained wandering about the shades of her dwelling, until the rays of a midnight moon silvered their foliage; then a strain of soft and solemn music faintly stole on his ear, and powerfully awakened his attention. This mysterious sound proceeded from the summit of the mound; and led by strains which harmonized with the hour, the place, and with the peculiar tone of his feelings and his mind, he ascended the acclivity; but it was with slow and doubtful steps, as if he were impelled to act by some secret impulse, which he did

not approve, and could not resist. As he reached the summit of the mound, he perceived, by the peculiar odours which breathed around him, that it was planted with the rarest and richest shrubs. A spring, gushing from its brow, shed a light dew on every side, which bestowed an eternal freshness on the balmy air, and on those fragrant flowers, which opened now their choicest sweets.

A pavilion, surrounded by a light and elegant verandah, rose, like a fairy structure, from the midst of the surrounding shades; and, from one of the lattices, proceeded those ærial sounds, which,

“ Sweet as from blest voices uttering joy,”

had first allured his attention. It seemed to inclose a particular apartment. Its lattices were composed of the aromatic verani, whose property it is, to allay a feverish heat; and which, by being dashed by the waters of an artificial fountain, bestowed a fragrant coolness on the air. A light gleamed through one of the lattices, and the Missionary found no difficulty in penetrating, with his eye, into the interior of the room. He perceived that the light proceeded from a lamp, suspended from the centre of the ceiling, which was painted with figures taken from the Indian mythology. Beneath the lamp stood a small altar, whose ivory steps were strewed with flowers and with odours.

The idol, to whom the offerings were made, wore the form and air of a child : by his cary bow, his arrows tipt with Indian blossoms, the Missionary recognised him as the lovely twin of the Grecian Cupid ; while, before her tutelar deity, knelt Euxima, playing on the Indian lyre, which she accompanied with a hymn to Camdeo. The sounds, wild and tender, died upon her lips, and she seemed to

“ Feed on thoughts,
Which voluntary mov'd harmonious numbers.”

She then arose, and poured incense into a small vase, in which the leaves of the sacred sami-tree burnt with a blue phosphoric light : then bowing to the altar, she said,
“ Glory be to Camdeo ; him by

whom Brahma and Vishnu are filled with rapturous delight; for the true object of glory is an union with our beloved : that object really exists ; but, without it, both heart and soul would have no existence."

As she pronounced this impassioned invocation, a tender and ardent enthusiasm diffused itself over her countenance : her eyelids gently closed, and soft and delightful visions seemed to absorb her soul and feelings.

The Missionary hastened away, and rapidly descended the mound. He had seen, he had heard, too much : even the very air he breathed communicated its fatal softness to his imagination, and tended to enervate his mind. A short time back, and

the Indian had shared with him a feeling as pure and as devotional as it was sublime and awful : he found her now involved in idolatrous worship. Hitherto a chaste and vestal reserve had consecrated her look, and guarded her words ; now a tender and impassioned languor was distinguished in both : and the virgin priestess, the widowed bride, who had hitherto appeared exclusively consecrated to the service of that Heaven she imaged upon earth, seemed now only alive to the existence of feelings in which Heaven could have no share.

For whose sake was this tender invocation made ? lived there an object worthy to steal between the vestal Prophetess and her paradise of

Indra? He recalled her look and air, and thought that as he had last beheld her in all the grace and blandishment of beauty and emotion, she resembled less the future foundress of a religious order, than one of the lovely Rajini, or female Passions, which, in the poetical mythology of her religion, were supposed to preside over the harmony of the spheres, and to steal their power over the hearts of men by sounds which breathed of heaven. But he discarded the seducing image, as little consonant to the tone of his mind, while he involuntarily repeated, "The true object of soul and mind is the glory of a union with our beloved;" until, suddenly recollecting the doctrines of mystic love, and that, even in his own pure faith, there were sects who addressed their

homage to Heaven in terms of human passion*, Luxima stood redeemed in his mind: for, whatever glow of imagination warms the worship of colder regions, he was aware that, in India, the ardent gratitude of created spirits was wont to ascend to the Creator in expressions of the most fervid devotion; that the tender eloquence of mystic piety too frequently assumed the character of human feelings; and that the faint line, which sometimes separated the language of love from that of religion, was too delicate to be perceptible but to the pure in spirit and devout in mind. He was himself

* It is unnecessary to mention the well-known doctrine of quietism, embraced by the Archbishop of Cambray.

of a rigid principle and a stoical order, and the language of his piety, like its sentiment, was lofty and sublime. Yet he was not intolerant towards the soft and pious weaknesses of others; and he now believed that the ardent enthusiasm of the lovely Heathen was a sure presage of the zeal and faith of the future Christian.

The little hills which encircled the vale where chance had fixed the residence of the Nuncio, seemed now to him as a magic boundary, whose line it was impossible to pass; and during the day which succeeded to that of Luxima's visit, he wandered near the path which led to her pavilion, or returned to his grotto, to caress the fawn she had com-

mitted to his care ; but always with a feeling of doubt and anxiety, as if expectation and disappointment divided his mind ; for he thought it probable, that the humanity of Luxima might lead her, now her first prejudices were vanquished, again to visit him, to inquire into the state of his own slight wound, or to see her convalescent favourite. Once he believed he heard her voice : he flew to the mouth of the grotto, but it was only the sweet soft whistle of the packimar, the Indian bird-catcher, as he hung, almost suspended, from the projection of a neighbouring rock, pointing his long and slender lines tipped with lime to the gaudy plumage of the pungola, who builds her nest in the recesses of the high-

est cliffs ; or lured to his nets, with imitative note, the lovely and social magana, the red-breast of the East. Again he heard a light and feathery foot-fall : he thought it must be Luxima's, but he only perceived at a distance, a slender youth bending his rapid way, assisted by a slight and brilliant spear ; and by his jama of snowy white, and crimson sash and turban, he recognised the useful and swift Hircarah, the faithful courier of some Indian rajah or Mogul omrah.

The sun, as it faded from the horizon, withdrew with it, hopes scarcely understood by him who indulged them. Hitherto his mind had received every impression, and combined every idea, through a religious influ-

ence; and even the Indian, in all the splendour of her beauty, her youth, and her enthusiasm, had stolen on his imagination solely through the medium of his zeal. Until this moment, woman was to him a thing unguessed at and unthought of. In Europe and in India, the few who had met his eye were of that class in society to whom delicacy of form was so seldom given, by whom the graces of the mind were so seldom possessed. Hitherto he had only stood between them and Heaven: they had approached him penitent and contrite, faded by time, or chilled by remorse; and he had felt towards them as saints are supposed to feel, who see the errors from which they are themselves exempt. His expe-

rience, therefore, afforded him no parallel for the character and form of the Priestess. A rapturous vision had, indeed, given him such forms of heaven to gaze on ; but on earth he had seen nothing to which he could assimilate, or by which compare her.

Yet, in reflecting on her charms, he only considered them as rendering her more worthy to be converted, and more capable of converting. He remembered that the pure light of Christianity owed its first diffusion to the influence of woman ; and that the blood of martyred vestals had flowed to attest their zeal and faith, with no inadequate effect. This consideration, therefore, sanctified the solici-

tude which Luxima awakened in his mind; and anxiously to expect her presence, and profoundly to feel her absence, were, he believed, sentiments which emanated from his religious zeal, and not emotions belonging to his selfish feeling.

On the evening of the following day, he repaired to the altar at the confluence of the streams, accompanied by the fawn, which was now sufficiently recovered to be restored to its mistress. His heart throbbed with a violence new to its sober pulse, when he perceived Luxima standing beneath the shadowy branches of a *cannella-alba*, or cinamon-tree, looking like the deity of the stream, in whose lucid wave her elegant and picturesque form

was reflected. The bright buds of the water-loving lotos were twined round her arms and bosom: she seemed fresh from her morning worship, and the enthusiasm of devotion still threw its light upon her features; but when the Missionary stood before her, this devotional expression was lost in the splendour of her illuminated countenance. The pure blood mantling to her cheek gradually suffused her whole face with radiant blushes: a tenderness hung upon her downcast eyes; and a smiling softness, a bashful pleasure, finely blended with a religious dignity, involved her whole person. There was so much of the lustre of beauty, the freshness of youth, the charm of sentiment, the mystery of devotion, and

the spell of grace, in her look, her air, her attitude, that the Missionary stood rapt in silent contemplation of her person, and wondering that one so fit for heaven should yet remain on earth.

The fawn, which had burst from the string of twisted grass by which the Missionary led it, now sprung to the feet of her mistress, who lavished on her favourite the most infantile caresses; and this little scene of re-union gave time to the Missionary to recover the reserved dignity of the apostolic Nuncio, which the abruptly awakened feelings of the man had put to flight. "Daughter," he said, "health and peace to thee and thine! May the light of the true religion

effuse its lustre o'er thy soul, as the light of the sun now irradiates thy form !”

As he spoke a language so similar to that in which the devotions of the heathen were wont to flow, he touched, by a natural association of ideas, on the chord of her enthusiasm ; and thrice bowing to the sun, she replied, “ I adore that effulgent power, in whose lustre I now shine, and of which I am myself an irradiated manifestation.”

The Missionary started ; his blood ran cold as he thus found himself so intimately associated in the worship of an infidel ; while, as if suddenly inspired, he raised his hands and eyes to heaven, and, prostrate

on the earth, prayed aloud, and with the eloquence of angels, for her conversion.

Luxima, gazing and listening, stood rapt in wonder and amazement, in awe and admiration. She heard her name tenderly pronounced, and inseparably connected with supplication to Heaven in her behalf: she beheld tears, and listened to sighs, of which she alone was the object, and which were made as offerings to the suppliant's God, that she might embrace a mode of belief, to whose existence, until now, she was almost a stranger. Professing, herself, a religion which unites the most boundless toleration to the most obstinate faith; the most perfect indifference to prose-

lytism, to the most unvanquishable conviction of its own supreme excellence; she could not, even remotely, comprehend the pious solicitude for her conversion, which the words and emotion of the Christian betrayed; but from his prayer, and the exhortations he addressed to her, she understood, that she had been the principal object of his visiting Cashmire, and that her happiness, temporal and eternal, was the subject of his ardent hopes and eloquent supplications.

This conviction sunk deep into her sensible and grateful heart, which was formed for the exercise of all those feelings which raise and purify humanity; and it softened, without conquering, the profound and firm-

rooted prejudices of her mind; and when the Monk arose, she seated herself on a shelving bank, and motioned to him to place himself beside her. He obeyed, and a short pause ensued, which the eloquent and fixed looks of the Indian alone filled up; at last, she said, in accent of emotion, "Christian, thou hast named me an idolatress; what means that term, which must sure be evil, since, when thou speakest it, methinks thou dost almost seem to shudder."

"I call thee idolatress," he returned, "because, even now, thou didst offer to the sun that worship, which belongs alone to Him who said, 'Let there be light; and there was light.'"—"I adore the sun,"

said Luxima, with enthusiasm, "as the great visible luminary; the emblem of that incomparably greater Light, which can alone illumine our souls."—"Ah!" he replied, "at least encourage this first principle of true faith, this pure idea of an essential Cause, this sentiment of the existence of a God, which is the sole idea innate to the mind of man."—"I would adore Him in his works," replied the Priestess; "but when I would contemplate him in his essence, I am dazzled; I am overwhelmed; my soul shrinks back, affrighted at its own presumption. I feel only the mighty interval which separates us from the Deity; overpowered, I sink to the earth, abashed and humbled in my conscious insignificance."

“Such,” said the Missionary, “are the timid feelings of a soul, struggling with error, and lost in darkness. It is by the operation of divine grace only, that we are enabled to contemplate the Creator in himself; it is by becoming a Christian that that divine grace only can be obtained!”

Luxima shuddered as he spoke. “No,” she said; “the feeling which would prompt me to meet the presence of my Creator; to image his nature to my mind; to form a distinct idea of his being, power, and attributes, would overpower me with fear and with confusion.”

As she spoke, a religious awe seemed to take possession of her

soul. She trembled; her countenance was agitated; and she repeated rapidly the creed of the faith she professed, prostrating herself on the earth, in sign of the profound submission and humility of her heart. The Missionary was touched by a devotion so pure and so ardent; and, when she had ceased to pray, he would have raised her from the earth; but, warm in all the revived feelings of her religion, her prejudices rekindled with her zeal; she shrunk from an assistance she would have now deemed it sacrilegious to accept, and, with a crimson blush, she haughtily exclaimed, "As the shadow of the pariah defiles the bosom of the stream over which it hangs its gloom, so is the descendant of Brahma profaned by

the touch of one who is neither of the same cast nor of the same sex."

The Missionary stood confused and overwhelmed by sentiments so incongruous, and by principles so discordant, as those which seemed to blend and to unite themselves in the character and mind of this extraordinary enthusiast. At one moment, the purest adoration of the Supreme Being, and the most sublime conceptions of his attributes, betrayed themselves in her eloquent words; in the next, she appeared wholly involved in the wildest superstitions of her idolatrous nation. Now she hung upon his words with an obvious delight, which seemed mingled with conviction; and now she shrunk from his approach, as if

he belonged to some species condemned of Heaven. To argue with her was impossible; for there was an incoherence in her ideas, which was not to be reconciled, or replied to. To listen to her was dangerous; for the eloquence of genius and feeling, and the peculiar tenets of her sect, gave a force to her errors, and a charm to her look, which weakened even the zeal of conversion in the priest, in proportion as it excited the admiration of the man. Determined, therefore, no longer to confide in himself, nor to trust to human influence on a soul so bewildered, so deep in error, the Missionary drew from his bosom the scriptural volume, translated into the dialect of the country, and, presenting it to her, said, "Daugh-

ter, thou seest before thee a man, who has subdued the passions incidental to his nature; a man, who has trampled beneath his feet the joys of youth, of rank, of wealth; who has abandoned his country and his friends, his ease and his pleasure, and crossed perilous seas, and visited distant regions, and endured pain, and vanquished obstacles; that others might share with him that bright futurity, reserved for those who believe, and follow the divine precepts which this sacred volume contains. Judge, then, of its purity and influence, by the sacrifices it enables man to make. Take it; and may Heaven pour into thy heart its celestial grace, that, as thou readest, thou mayst edify and believe!"

Luxima took the book, gazing silently on him who presented it. His countenance, the tone of his voice, seemed no less to affect her senses, than the solemnity of his address to impress and touch her mind. The Missionary moved slowly away; he had restored his mind to its wonted holy calm; he wished not again to encounter the eyes, or listen to the accents of the Indian. If she were not influenced by the inspired writings he had put into her hand, "neither would she by one who should descend from heaven."

He proceeded on, nor glanced one look behind him; and, though he heard a light foot-fall near him, yet his eyes were still fixed upon his rosary. At last a sweet and low

voice pronounced the name of "Father!" The tender epithet sunk to his heart: he paused, and Luxima stood beside him. He turned his eyes on her for a moment, but suddenly withdrawing them, he fastened their glances on the earth. "Daughter," he said, "what wouldst thou?"—"Thy forgiveness!" she replied timidly: "I shrunk from thy approach, and therefore I fear to have offended thee; for haply the women of thy nation offend not their gods, when men of other casts approach them, and they forbid it not."

"The God whom they adore," he said, "judges not by the act alone, but by the motive. The pure in heart commit no evil deeds; and,

perhaps, there are women, even of thy nation, daughter, who would deem the presence of a Christian minister no profanation to their purity."

"But I," she returned, with majesty, "I am a sacerdotal woman! a consecrated vestal, and a guarded Priestess! And know, Christian, that the life of a vestal should resemble the snow-buds of the ipomea, when, hid in their virgin calix, the sun's ray has never kissed their leaves. Yet, lest thou part from me in anger, accept this sacrifice."

As she spoke, she averted her eyes. A deep blush coloured her cheek; and, trembling between an habitual prejudice and a natural feeling, she

extended to the Missionary hands of a pure and exquisite beauty, which never before had known a human pressure. The Missionary took them in silence. He believed that the rapid pulsation of his heart arose from the triumphant feeling excited by the conquest of a fatal prejudice; but when he recollected also, that this was the first time the hands of a woman were ever folded in his own, he started, and suddenly dropt them; while Luxima, animated by a devotional fervour, clasped them on her bosom, and said, in a low and tender voice, "Father, thou who art thyself pure, and holy as a Brahmin's thought, pray for me to thy gods; I will pray for thee to mine!" Then turning her eyes for a moment on him, she pronounced the

Indian salaam, and, with a soft sigh and pensive look, moved slowly away.

The Missionary pursued her with his glance, until the thickening shade of a group of mangoostan-trees concealed her from his view. Her sigh seemed still to breathe on his ear, with a deathless echo : at last, he abruptly started, and walked rapidly away, as if, in leaving a spot where all breathed of her, he should leave the idea of her beauty and her softness behind him. He endeavoured to form an abstract idea of her character, independent of her person ; to consider the mind distinct from the woman ; to remember only the prejudice he had vanquished, and not the hands he had touched ; but

still he felt them in his own, soft and trembling; and still he sought to lose, in the subject of his mission, the object of his imagination. He endeavoured to banish her look and her sigh from his memory; and to recall the last short, but extraordinary conversation he had held with her. He perceived that a pure system of natural religion was innate in her sublime and contemplative mind; but the images which personified the attributes of Deity, in her national faith, had powerfully fastened on her ardent imagination, and blended their influence with all the habits, the feelings, and the expressions of her life. The splendid mythology of the Brahminical religion was eminently calculated to seduce a fancy so warm; and

the tenets of her sect, to harmonize with the tenderness of a heart so sensible. But a life so innocent as that she led, and a mind so pure as that she possessed, rendered her equally capable to feel and to cherish that abstract and awful sense of a First Cause, without which all religion must be cold and baseless.

This consciousness of a predisposition to truth on her part, with the daily conquest of those prejudices which might prevent its promulgation on his, gave new vigour to his hopes, and, in the anticipation of so illustrious a convert, he already found the sacrifices and labours of his enterprise repaid.

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Morgan, Sydney (Owenson)
The missionary

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